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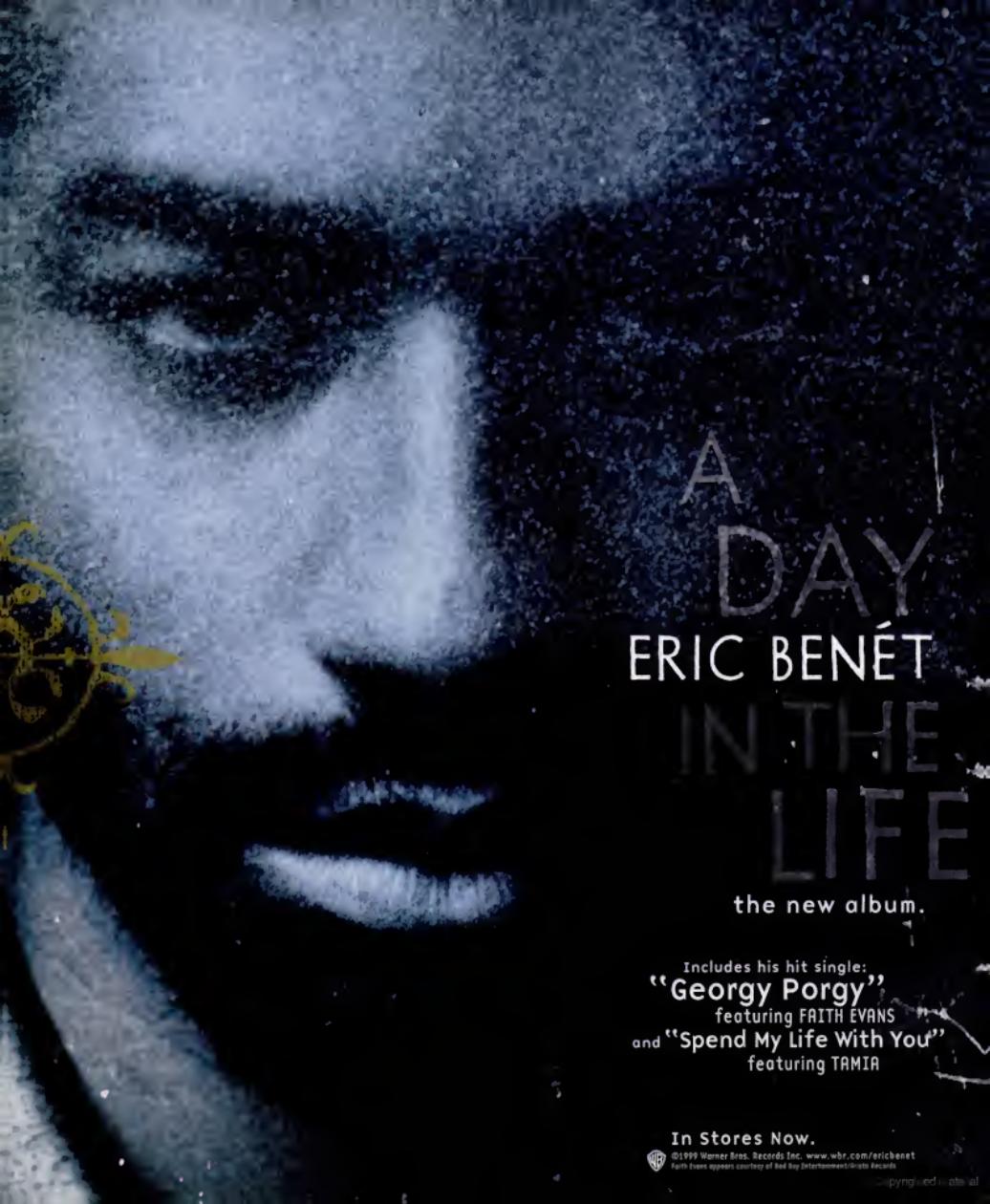
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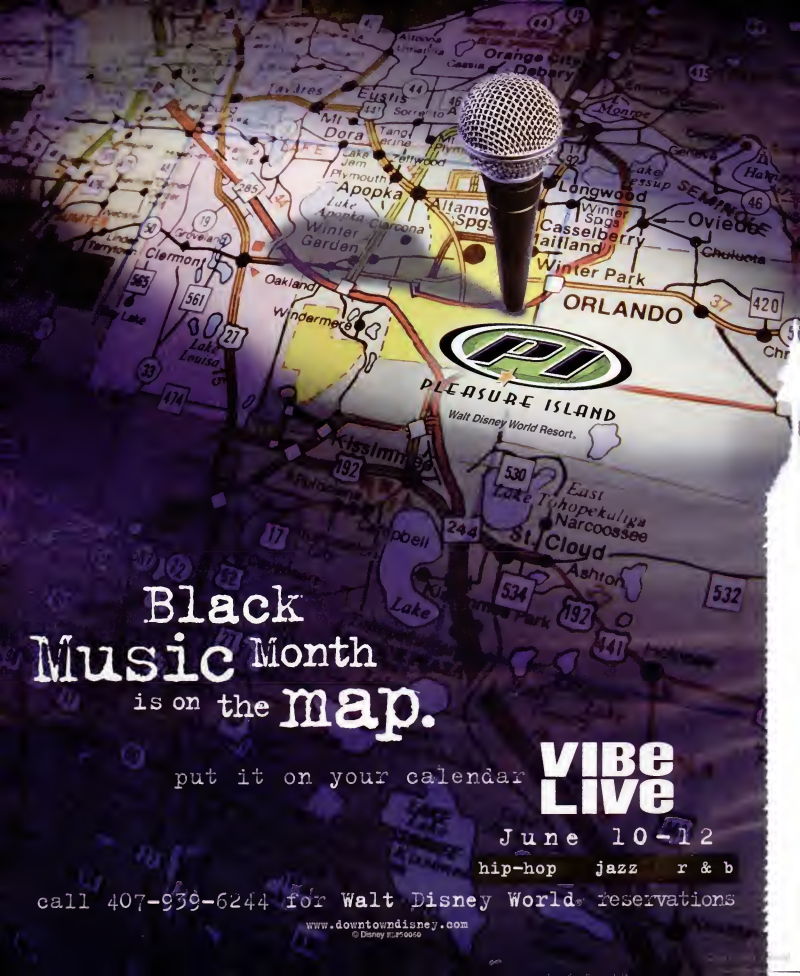
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ON THE COVER:

Mase photographed exclusively for VIBE by Marc Baptiste; styling by Emil Wilbekin; prop styling by Denise Felthorn; grooming by Lawrence for Pure Elegance; makeup by Greg Vaughn for L'Atelier; white cotton jersey by Polo Jeans Co. RALPH LAUREN; denim carpenter shorts by GUESS; models from left: Black nylon and spandex bikini by Dolce & Gabbana; shoes by Kenneth Cole; black nylon bikini with blue trim by Phat Farm; shoes by Patrick Cox; black nylon bikini by Calvin Klein; shoes by Patrick Cox. Face & Body: All makeup by M.A.C.

ABOVE:

Oz & Wale photographed by Marc Baptiste; styling by Kadi Agüero; gray cotton cargo pant by Etnye



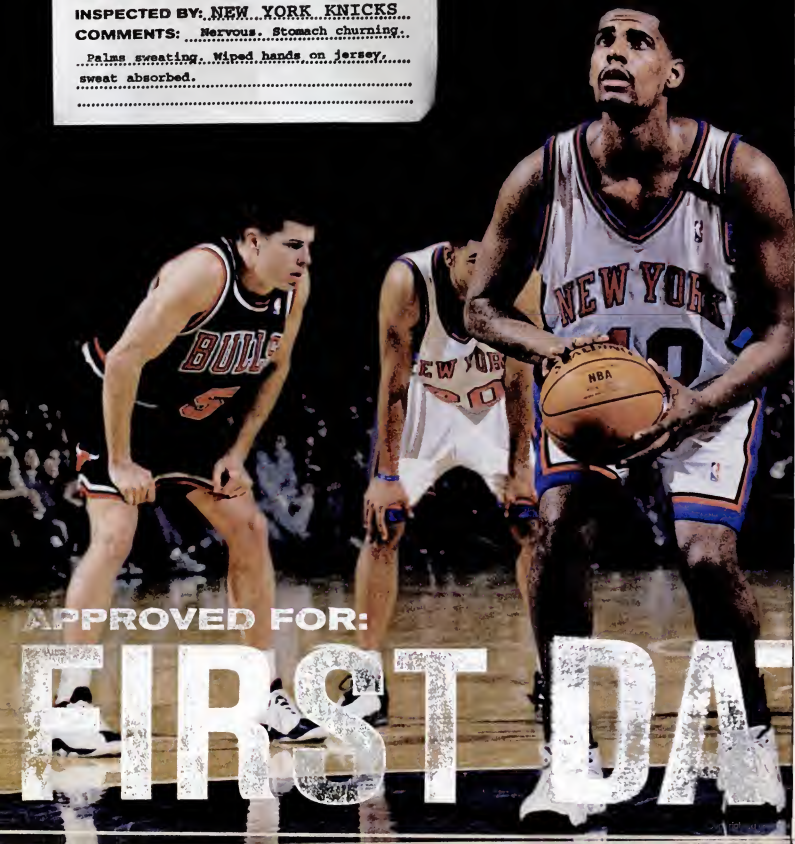
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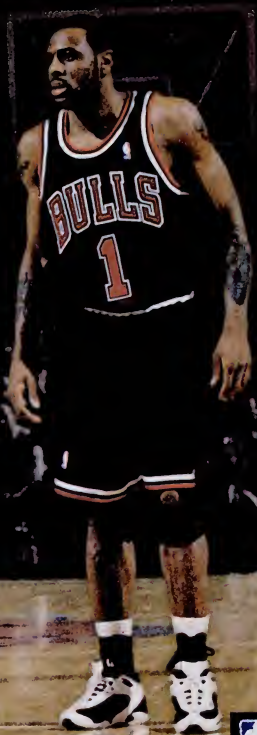
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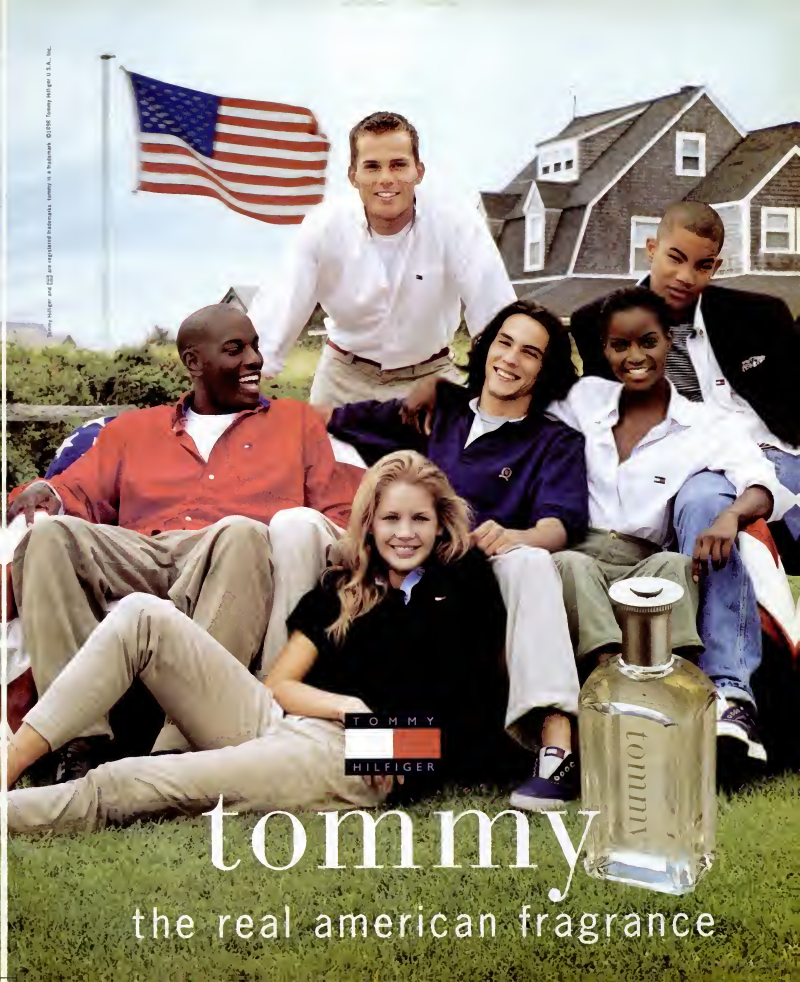
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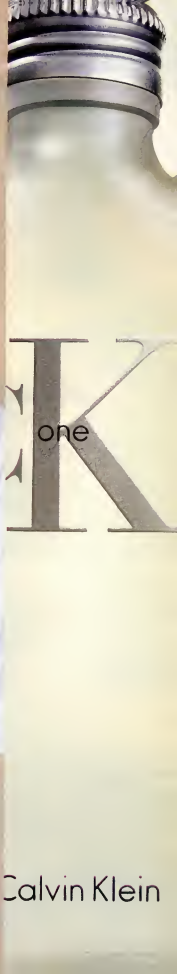
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One of VIBE's founding editorial fathers, Rob Kenner, 32, held a place on staff from 1994 to 1998. Now serving as a contributing editor, and working from his home in the Hinterlands, Kenner has more time to dedicate to his own writing. This month, he uses 13 different viewpoints to analyze white-hot rapper Eminem ("13 Ways of Looking at a Whiteboy," page 116). "It's a trip when you realize that your passion has bit you on the ass," he says. "A lot of white people get into hip hop hoping to lose themselves; instead it shows you how to see yourself in the harshest light."

Joe Sorren has been drumming for his group, Lyle and the Sparkface Band, for 10 years now. For just as long, though, the Chi-Town native has been bringing famous folks to life in his paintings. Sorren has previously put in work for Warner Bros. and Atlantic Records, *The New Yorker*, and *Rolling Stone*. This issue, VIBE brought the 28-year-old Phoenix-based artist aboard to depict Caucasian sensation Eminem. What is a VIBE contributor doing without a nickname? "I've had a few," says the far-from-average Joe. "Fucker, Bastard, but none have ever stuck with me."



AL T. DOOPER



At 26, Alex Tehrani has already seen enough of the planet to last a lifetime. The all-star VIBE contributing lensman has snapped shots of several world leaders and was an Eisenstaedt award runner-up for his photo essay of Atlanta's Freaknik ("Freak Out," October 1998). More recently, his work was displayed in VIBE's April Def Jam feature ("Bigger and Deffer," by Chairman Mao). This month, Tehrani put in major work, including lugging his heavy equipment around the crowded Tunnel nightclub, just so you could feel the scene ("Hot Spot," page 124). But don't shed any tears for Tehrani—the assignment wasn't that bad. "Worst-case scenario," he says, "if there was nothing to photograph, I would just put my equipment down and enjoy the music."

"It's easy to write about hip hop," says VIBE regular Tony Green, "once you don't recognize boundaries in music." Having played "gee-tar" for three decades now, Green's savvy about all sorts of styles. Now living in Jacksonville, Fla., the 38-year-old scribe grew up in Yonkers, where his father taught social studies at Longfellow Middle School (Mary J. Blige was one of his students). Green has held down a steady gig at the *Florida Times Union* for the past three years; his work has been featured on the pages of VIBE for just as long. For our special summer issue, he belted-out with southern players Eightball and MJG ("Perms, Science Fiction, and Hip Hop," page 142). What was that like? Green sums it up like this: "A lot of weed and a lot of soul food."

MEAN TONE GREEN



IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



"She was raised in Illinois. Right outside of Chicago." But make no mistake, music lifestyles editor Minya Oh has been a full-fledged Harlem World representative since '91. It was there, four years later, that she first met aspiring rap star and fellow Harlemite Murder Mase. "I remember him trying to kick it to me in front of Mart 125," says Oh, now 26. "He was just as arrogant as he is now, but he was also just as adorable." The two have become such good buddies that the cuddly rapper was willing to share all his secrets for Oh's first VIBE cover story, "State of Mase" (page 100). This issue, Minya also puts us up on the hottest new producers in her monthly column, Oh, Word!, edits—as always—the TV/Books/Tech section, and gives us the inside story on her favorite hot spot, Manhattan's legendary Tunnel. "I'm a Tunnel veteran," says Oh. "Fortunately, I don't have the scars to prove it."

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THE VIBESpot

From the Player's Suite to FILA on your feet, VIBE parties were the place to be this spring! If you want to know who was in the house, scan these flicks.



1. FILA and VIBE hosted a party to show their spankin' brand-new spring collection at a secret loft spot in New York City. Supplying the spirits were William Jackson, assistant state manager—metro NY, Seagram; Matt Pressman, corporate accounts manager, VIBE; and Howe Burch, senior v.p. of advertising & communications, FILA USA, Inc.

2. Among the celebs in the front row were Malik Yoba, Pras of the Fugees, Damon, Shawn and Marlon Wayans, and Puff Daddy, shown here chatting with Elliot Betesh, president, Dr. Jay's.

3. Between the show and sipping on Absolut, Miller Genuine Draft and Miller Lite, Matt Pressman caught up with (l-r): Jon Epstein, president & CEO, FILA USA, Inc.; Keith Clinscales, president & CEO, VIBE; and John Connelly, executive director, entertainment marketing and promotions, FILA USA, Inc.

4. If it has to do with plays, you know Martell has to be in the mix. The Motor City's Roostertail club was home to Martell's traveling Player's Suite

this spring. Hosted by Frankie Darcell, the event was attended by WJLB FM staff (shown here). Lucky attendees were serenaded by soul-singing siblings KCI, (shown here) and JoJo.

5. Party planner extraordinaire David Watkins (far left) of Icon Lifestyle Marketing, pulled together the fabulous affair with a little help from Robin Gibson, corporate accounts director, VIBE, and Bill Cherrie, of Seagram's America.

6. Laurent Martell of the T.J. Martell family and Jennifer Crowl from Seagram's had a wonderful evening at the Player's Suite.

7. Laurent Martell showin' how players play.

8. The Martell girls sparkled while handing out smokes to compliment the Martell.

9. VIBE brought a little New York flavor to the Cosmetics Fragrance and Toiletries Association convention at the Boca Raton Beach Resort in Florida with a pumpin' party! Coolin' out at the

"Hot Spot" were (l-r): Len Burnett, associate publisher, VIBE, Butch Beard, former New York Knick, Clarence Smith, president, *Essence*, and John Rollins, publisher, VIBE.

10. Also enjoying the VIBE party at CTFA was Katina Lee, face/beauty coordinator, VIBE, (shown here with Abigail Marcus) who stole a hug from Len Burnett.

11. Just when they thought the night was over, Abigail Marcus and Len Burnett and friends waded the dance floor one more time.

Photos by:
(1-3) Johnny Nunez
(5-8) Courtesy of Martell
(9-11) Ahna Biddle

color

outside

the lines

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"I revolutionized this industry. Every time Ricki Lake says the word 'penis' on the air, you have me to thank."

—Howard Stern, at the convention for the National Association of Television Programming Executives

"We never have anything on our show that's as dramatic as what they have on soap operas. There is far more sex, infidelity, promiscuity, and murder on the soaps.... What makes our show different is that this is the first time we've seen it with real people. It's just that the [soap] people are beautiful, so no one complains!"

—Jerry Springer, dissing his guests (TV Guide online)

"Unless you are going to kill people on the air, and if not just hit them on the head with chairs, and unless you are going to have sexual intercourse—and not just, as I saw the other day, a guy pulling down his pants and pulling out his penis—then there comes a point when you have oversaturated yourself."

—Oprah Winfrey, on Jerry (New York Times)

"All of us have been forced to put whites on our shows this season.... It's not our network.... There was never an outcry to put nobody [African-American] on *Home Improvement* or *Friends*, but all of a sudden I gotta have whites on *The Steve Harvey Show* for it to kick. That isn't true, but that's the state America is in. All I can do is try to be a player in the game."

—Steve Harvey at the NAACP Image Awards

"I never look at myself and think, Damn what a good-looking guy—that face deserves to be on TV. It's usually, Jesus, I've got a globe for a head. Look at all the extra flesh on my neck!"

—Andy Richter, from *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, on personal affirmation (Us)

"A landlord named Roper / Did a show at the Copa / When I'm finished with this / I'll be paid like Oprah"

—David Nuyten's *Stress* (Doubtless, Simon & Schuster, 1998)

editor's choice

"Life is difficult."

—The first line of M. Scott Peck's 1986 *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster). It's sold more than 5 million copies.

from the VIBE vault

APRIL 1998

"When Brandy talks about Mase, her words begin to come together fast like this. She gets all excited and exaggerated and Sheneneh-boo. 'I'm a big fan of Mase. A huge fan. I want to do a song with Mase so bad! It's like Mase is kinda like me, laid-back.'"

—Karen R. Good, quoting Mase's supposed ex-boo Brandy

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boomshots



Vibe Contributing Editor Rob Kenner takes a look at the Reggae culture through exclusive in-depth features on artists making musical waves. His archived section, aptly titled The Vault, includes previously unpublished reggae stories as well as past Vibe features.

virtual revolutions



Get the verdict on new music before you buy it: Virtual Revolutions reviews your favorite artist's CD's before it hits music stores.

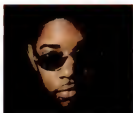
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JIGSAW PLANET

Yes, I do love him ("You Must Love Him," by Harry Allen, April 1999). The conversation between Harry Allen and Jay-Z really blew me away. As always, Jay was sincere and

JAY-Z IS ONE OF THE WACKEST MCS OUT THERE....PUNKS LIKE HIM SHOULDN'T RHYME, THEY SHOULD BE ACTORS.

poignant. I was surprised to read about the respect he has for women and the love he has for other rappers. But what's most admirable about him is his ability to change from street hustler to king of hip hop. No need to ask who I'm wit—it's Jig-gaaaa.

*Kena Vance
Chicago, IL*

Ain't no love here! Jay-Z is one of the wackest MCs out there. His music doesn't reflect any spirit or creativity. He's just another one of those rappers that talks about how much money he has. Punks like him shouldn't rhyme, they should be actors.

*Anthony Garcia
Alhambra, CA*

I was ecstatic to see Jay-Hova on VIBE's cover. It's upsetting to hear others complain about how Jigga only flows about materialistic things. The man has earned his possessions. Why not flash the ice or rhyme about the whip? Look how far he's come. Jay, please continue to bless the mike until the day you rest.

*Cystal Alexander
Lafayette, LA*

I only recently started listening to Jay-Z, but after seeing him light up the stage on the Hard Knock Life tour and reading about him in VIBE, I love him already. Whether he's performing, recording in the studio, or talking to a journalist, Jay does everything with heart and passion. Brooklyn's finest reigns supreme.

*Michelle
Moncks Corner, SC*

I've changed my whole perception of Jay-Z. He's nothing like the arrogant rap star I thought he was. I'm glad to see there's some honesty left in the hip hop community. I was so impressed by how candid his answers were that I had to run out and purchase his latest CD. I only hope his acting skills are not as great

as his MC skills. If they are, he's fooled us all.

*T.J. Maxx
Brooklyn, NY*

The VIBE Q seemed more like a police interrogation than an interview. Why did the conversation have to center around Jay's past affiliation with the drug game? Was the media assassin trying to assassinate Jay's character? We don't love "Iceberg Slim" because of how he used to live, we love him because of the person he has become and the music he puts out—ya heard!

*Asalan
Schenectady, NY*

JAM FOR ME

Thank you for the flattering article about DefJam ("Bigger and Deffer," by Chairman Mao, April 1999). However, I have to say that it was misleading in terms of the creative input I have had with my artists over the years. It's not true that I promoted and exploited a bunch of other creative people. I resent being referred to as a promoter. I spent years living in recording studios,

MAIL

helping to write and produce songs, much in the same way Puffy and MasterP do today. I also assisted in creating images and marketing many artists. I created a significant part of the culture that pays your bills. Check the credits on many of the songs that changed your life, and you'll find this to be true.

*Russell Simmons
DefJam/Rush Communications*

I was saddened to see that DefJam, which I'd been a loyal fan of all these years, has lost its integrity and become another money-hungry record label. Russell Simmons and

Lyor Cohen get no respect for promoting MCs that only talk about fat bankrolls and iced-out jewelry. I agree with Rick Rubin's opinion that rappers are too caught up in cashing in on hip hop's success rather than furthering the art of making music.


*Adam Frechette
West Springfield, MA*

When I used to see the DefJam logo, I envisioned house parties, ill MCs, and head-banging beats. Now when I see that same logo, all I can think of is Cuban cigars, cell phones, and Cristal. The label I



YOUR BEST SHOT

Chelcee Rene Jackson, Shoreham, New York

A photograph of a glass of whiskey with ice cubes on a white napkin, placed next to another white napkin with handwritten text. The scene is set on a dark wooden surface. The glass is partially filled with a golden liquid and contains two large ice cubes. The napkin to the right has the name 'Kathy' and the phone number '(336) 766-9201' written on it in black ink. A small puddle of liquid is visible on the wooden surface near the bottom of the glass.

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loved has become greedy and materialistic. They kicked musical innovators like Public Enemy to the curb for no-talent, image-driven acts like DMX and Foxy Brown. Russell and Lyor, what are you guys doing? You need to dig deep into your catalog and listen to DE's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*.

Almed
Washington, D.C.

ALL BLACKS DOWN

I was at work, minding my business, reading VIBE ["Pistol Whipped," by Denene Millner, April 1999], when all of sudden I had an urge to kick someone's ass. The statement "No matter what state you're in, everybody knows that a black man plus a gun equals a criminal" proves racism still lives next door. I don't know what grassy knoll this person just walked off, but anybody who believes such bullshit needs the ignorance kicked out of them. Last time I checked, white men and women shoot people too.

Candace King
Baltimore, MD

Editor's note: The statement you're referring to [page 124] was made by a black police officer in reference to the perception of black men.

Your article was a sad testimony to what our children define as courage. These hooligans with speech impediments don't have a clue what true power is. Back in the day when I was growing up, the weapon of choice for defense was the same thing you prayed with...your hands. The new school should learn from us.

CJ Old school
Glenarden, MD

It's a shame that your own brother is quick to stick you up. They might as well be working for the KKK. I agree with the rappers who carry guns. I don't have half the loot they

VIBE's recent story on rappers getting busted for guns hurt me to the core. It was totally irresponsible and especially unfair to O' Dirty Bastard. Although he was innocent of the charges, he was made to look like a criminal. You guys stooped to the level of the mainstream media who love to show black men being led away in handcuffs. I expected more from a magazine that professes to love hip hop.

Michael Robinson
Jamaica, NY

KNOW YOUR ROLE!

After reading your article on The Rock [Quickie, by Gabrielle L.

"people's elbow." Get a date on your own time. Last time I checked, Quincy Jones started VIBE, not Hugh Hefner.

C. Sanders
St. Louis, MO

HIGHER THAN EVER

Congratulations to VIBE for having the courage and common sense to recognize the anniversary of Notorious B.I.G.'s death two years in a row ("Still Missing Big Poppa," by Mister Cee as told to Minya Oh, April 1999). March 9, 1999 not only marked two years since his death, but it was my son's third birthday. As I lit the candles on his birthday

THAT'S LIKE ASKING, WHAT BUSINESS DOES TYRA BANKS HAVE IN ADS FOR VICTORIA'S SECRET? PEOPLE OF ALL RACES ENJOY PRETTY PANTIES, JUST AS EVERYONE LOVES FLY MUSIC AND HOT MAGAZINES.

have, but I have the same mentality. I'll be damned if I let some chump off the street take what's mine. Like the saying goes, "I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by six."

Mrs. Sharon Simms
Marietta, GA

Gabrielle, April 1999], I have two questions. Can you guys give us a bigger article on pro wrestling? And, at the end of the interview, did Gabrielle get a piece of The Rock? With all the talk about sex, it seemed like she wanted to "rock his world," if you smell what I'm cooking.

Deirdre Garmon
Buffalo, NY

That interview with wrestling stud Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson was so hot. You asked all the right questions. I knew he had to be biracial, but I didn't know what he was mixed with. Next time, could you please interview Steve Austin? He's "Stone Cold" sexy, and I would love to lay the smack down on him.

Leslie K. Chatman
Plano, TX

When your "roody pooh candy" asses interview someone, don't let hormones get in the way. Here you are interviewing a major superstar, and all you can do is flirt? As a wrestling fan, I don't care what slow songs The Rock listens to or what the hardest part of his body is. Cats like me want to know whether he gets injured after taking so many falls and how he conceived the idea for the "people's eyebrow" and

cake, I couldn't help but think of hip hop's great loss. Through reminders like your article and the occasional name-drops in songs, Biggie will live forever. When we teach our children to aspire to greatness, we need to teach them our history, or it's doomed to repeat itself.

Cara "Lovely" Remmert
Albany, NY

Another article on Biggie? It seems like he's in VIBE every month. Yes he did his thing, but are we forgetting that two rap legends were taken away from us? Tupac was just as talented and touched just as many people, but do we see him all over VIBE? When is he going to get his tribute?

Natalie Johnson
Atlanta, GA

BOUNCE TO THIS

You'll need to reevaluate what you bounced first [Start Opener, by Minya Oh with David Bry, April 1999]. You failed to mention Crucial Conflict. The video for "Hay" definitely set bounce off. People like Juvenile are only following in Crucial's footsteps. Give Crucial the recognition they deserve. Hee-haw!

Asalani Barkley
Schredy, NY



Curve



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RICH'S LAZARUS GOLDSMITH'S STERN'S

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The *Traveling Miles* album is a collection of songs that Wilson wrote and recorded during her time in the South. The album is a collection of songs that Wilson wrote and recorded during her time in the South.

Traveling Miles is a collection of songs that Wilson wrote and recorded during her time in the South.

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I want to thank Minya Oh and David Bry for writing the article on the bounce. People have never thought of southerners as creators of hot music. Hopefully now when people think of the dirty South they'll realize we are major contributors to hip hop.

Kathy Bryant
Prentiss, MS

It's cool to recognize the South as inventing bounce, but there's more to us than ass-shaking music. You guys need to dig deep and take notice of artists like Trick Daddy, A.D., and

MC Lyte and Chuck D need to grow up. Contrary to what they think, hip hop journalists are not here to make artists feel better. VIBE is no different from other publications in the fact that they are obligated to inform and in some cases give opinions. "When We Were Kings" [by Elliott Wilson, February 1999] pointed out a simple fact of life. You old schoolers are not as hot as you used to be. While some of the artists mentioned in the article may not want to admit that their day in the sun has passed, the stats don't lie. It's better to go out gracefully than fool your-

IT'S COOL TO RECOGNIZE THE SOUTH AS INVENTING BOUNCE, BUT THERE'S MORE TO US THAN ASS-SHAKING MUSIC.

First Platoon. Everybody down here is not on that Luke vibe. Just because we're country doesn't mean we're not street.

Derick
Pompano Beach, FL

BOOM BOOM BOOM

Big up and reecept to Boom Shots [by Rob Kenner, April 1999]. I was very excited to see Rob Kenner delving into the world of dub poetry. Muta and Linton are most definitely great subjects to start with. Not many know about dub poetry. Please continue to school people.

Aisha D'Aguiar
Covington, GA

Editor's note: Check out the full Muta-baraka and Linton Karesi Johnson interview at www.vibe.com.

LET ME FIND OUT

I'm glad Lyte put you in your place [Letters, April 1999]. She's been rocking shows since she was 12 years old. I should know—I was the first MC to bring her on stage. With all the dues she's paid, comparing her to anyone is ludicrous. That only shows you have the hip hop knowledge of an inchworm. VIBE needs to apologize to all the rappers it disrespected.

Just-lee
Bronx, NY

selves into thinking you're still relevant. Your legacies in the annals of hip hop are still secure. Don't tarnish them by trying to hold on to a dormant career.

Darryn Simmons
Montgomery, AL

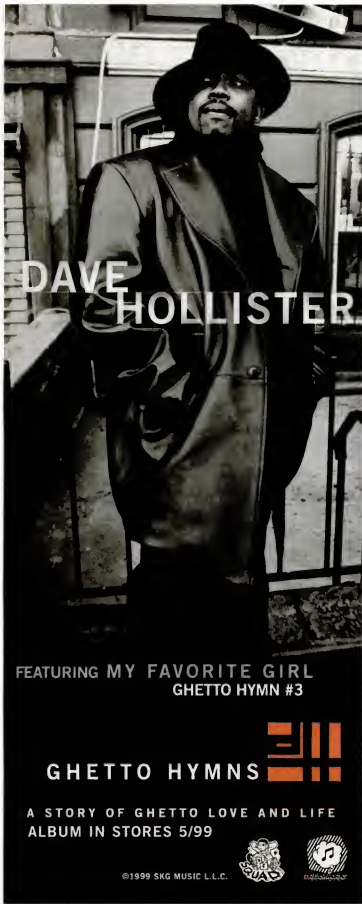
The question Steve Williams asked [Letters, April 1999] "what do a pair of pasty-faced Caucasian models have to do with the hip hop world covered by VIBE," was ignorant as hell. That's just like asking what business does Tyra Banks have in ads for Victoria's Secret? People of all races enjoy pretty panties and silky nighties, just as everyone loves fly music and hot magazines.

Eden Briscoe
Tustin, CA

Brittany Price of Suffolk, Va., claimed she was offended by the title "Strictly for My Wiggaz" [by Stephan Talty, February 1999]. Maybe I'm not the smartest person in the world, but it took me a long time to understand why any white person would be offended by such a term. I'm a white kid very much in love with hip hop culture, and I would never consider myself a wigger. That word only pertains to whites who do things



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such as dress from head to toe in Tommy wear, blast Master P, and pack heat in a bubble goose just to be accepted by the African-American community. So, Ms. Price, if this pertains to you, you should paint "wigger" down your back.

Ian "DJ-e" Kowalewski
Ocean City, MD

CRACKIN' UP

I was thrilled when I reached 20 Questions [March 1999] and read "Couldn't you go for some Crackerjacks right about now?" I hope that you get as much pleasure munching on Crackerjacks as I do reading your magazine every month. Thanks for recognizing that Crackerjacks are timeless. No matter where you are when you eat them, they instantly take us back in the day.

Pierre Bernard Delice
Frito-Lay, New Ventures
Dallas, TX

COVERED IN SILK

Big up to VIBE for being the first to put that fine Silk: the Shocker on a magazine cover this year ["Shock Treatment," by Jeff Mao, March 1999]. His props are long overdue. Though he's a sex symbol, he remains well grounded. Being humble is so sexy (his good looks don't hurt either).

Chianti Jones
St. Louis, MO

I salute your team for keeping VIBE hip, edgy, and carrying music into a place no other magazine has gone. Your covers are usually provocative and sexy, so you can imagine my surprise when I saw the appalling Silk and Master P cover. I was repulsed by the anger in their eyes and violent body language. Do we really need to see more photos depicting angry black men? Why would you guys deviate from the beautiful images we love you for?

Shanin Faye Molinaro
Los Angeles, CA

I haven't seen any entertainer get more criticism in your

magazine than Master P. Why does the public hate him so much? He and the No Limit soldiers have done nothing but entertain folks and make money. Enough is enough! VIBE needs to do a better job with handling the negativity toward No Limit.

T. Pyane
Washington, D.C.

JUST WONDERING

I have a question for all these disgruntled rappers who seem to believe that they are getting a raw deal from the media. Why is it that when you hear a few bad things about your music from hip hop media you respond with threats and acts of violence? But when mainstream media say far more damaging and inaccurate things you suddenly become deaf, dumb, and blind? Do your fans a favor: Grow up and get rid of your ghetto mentality.

Chris Paul
Houston, TX

Am I the only one who's confused by the Roots? Every time I see their video on MTV or BET I get excited. I sing along with Erykah, "If you are worried about where I've been or who I saw..." But there is one thing that takes away from the video. I don't know what the hell is going on. Does anyone?

Tabereab Gilbreath
Berkley, CA

CORRECTIONS

- Last month's edition of Oh, Word? listed Mary J. Blige's record label as MCA/Universal. It is actually MCA.
- Last month's in the Mix photo No. 8 was taken by Nana Bandoh.

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 211 Lexington Avenue, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10016 (include your daytime phone number). Or send e-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (include address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.



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START

DOUBLE-CROSS COLORS

The navy pinstripes of the New York Yankees. The people-eetin' purple of the Minnesota Vikings. The Boston Celtics' 'shamrockin' green. Team identity indivisible from team colors. A true fan sports the very same Celtics jersey Dwayne Schintzius does while bricking an eight-foot jumper. You know, representing for your team! Lately, though, the tint's gotten twisted. Try on this reality:

Chicago White Sox shirts in blood red. Banana yellow L.A. Dodgers jerseys. How 'bout N.W.A (circa 1988) rocking fuchsia Raiders caps?

These days, you can find sports gear emblazoned with your favorite team's logo in every color of the rainbow. But when I see kids in puffy jackets wearing Kelly green caps with a red Yankees logo, I think, What the frappe is that? (Answer: mad loot for the fashion-forward world of athletic gear.) The theory behind this chromatic infidelity is, of course, that it permits the consumer the luxury of repping his or her favorite team and, at the same time, coordinating a super-fly ensemble in any color at all. But in my Cleveland-lovin', sports-crazed mind, a bright-orange Indians cap wouldn't represent my team. It'd represent blasphemy! And it would be indicative of the increasing disrespect that the sports world has for its own traditions.

The rampant disregard for team colors symbolizes a much greater evil than fashion faux pas. Agents and athletes are grossly abusing free agency and arbitration. Owners are buying themselves championship-caliber rosters only to sell them off the following year; players bounce from one team to the next like they're playing hopscotch; and they've even phased out crowd-inspiring organists in favor of prerecorded rock. I cannot be Roy G. Ambivalent about this! It's consumerism over class!

It's rumored that Alfred Hitchcock, noting the natural human aversion to blue food, would throw lavish dinner parties and dye all the food blue, then sit back and watch his guests disinterestedly picking at their otherwise delicious meals. When it comes to sports gear, changing the color sours the taste. If, when pro football re-emerges in Cleveland next year, I see that my beloved Browns are blue, surely I will be too.

Peter Relic

Money Clips

The bigger the budget
the better the video?

From the Hollywood hugeness of Will Smith's "The Wild Wild West" to the keep-it-realist of Common's "1999" to the inspired "roots-fi" radicalism of Roots Manuva's "Juggle Tings Proper," here's the breakdown on three new video productions with very different end results.



Man in white: Will Smith on set

ARTIST: Will Smith

SONG: "The Wild Wild West" (Columbia), which samples Stevie Wonder's 1976 "I Wish" (Motown)

DIRECTOR: Paul Hunter, who has worked with Puffy and Lenny Kravitz

BUDGET: "At least" \$1 million

FORMAT: 35 mm

LOCATIONS: Warner Bros. studio lot, Hollywood's Pantages Theater

IN THE MAKING: Three to four weeks of preproduction, seven days filming, six weeks postproduction and editing; top hip-hop choreographer Fatima Robinson worked moves with 40 dancers for a final day of filming devoted to a single "Thriller"-esque sequence

CAMEOS: Kool Moe Dee, Babyface, Stevie Wonder, Enrique Iglesias, Larenz Tate, Salma Hayek, Dru Hill

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: "The Wild Wild West" is the theme for the summer movie of the same name; video action sequences take place in the Atrium, the lair of the villain, Dr. Arlo Lovelace (Kenneth Branagh), where the kidnapped Rita Escobar (Salma Hayek) is rescued by James West (Will Smith).

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S MOUTH: "Will and I got together in Aspen in January and skied and talked about the [video's] narrative. Will's words were, 'I'm humbly at your service—I'm with you, dog.' My favorite movie is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the adventure and romance style of it is an influence."



Larenz Tate and Salma Hayek takes



Director Paul Hunter consults Stevie Wonder



Common



Cutting up on camera

ARTIST: Common featuring Sadat X

SONG: "1999" (Rawkus)

DIRECTORS: Betsy Blakemore and Jasone

BUDGET: \$80,000

FORMAT: 35 mm

LOCATION: All shot outdoors in Brooklyn and downtown Manhattan

IN THE MAKING: Two days shooting, two days editing

CAMEOS: Talib Kweli, Harold Hunter, Sadat X (Brand Nubian), Jeru the Damaja, Black Thought (the Roots)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Color sequence of present-day hip-hop party zooms into black-and-white sequences of Common as a '60s-era Black Panther.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S MOUTH: "The video begins with Kweli and Harold walking in front of a big graffiti mural that Chino from Zoo York put up. On budgets

like this it's people giving a lot of themselves because they love hip-hop."

ARTIST: Roots Manuva

SONG: "Juggle Tings Proper" (Big Dada/Ninja Tune)

DIRECTOR: Richard Anthony

BUDGET: \$2,500

FORMATS: Sony DV for time-lapse sequences, 16 mm for performance shots

LOCATION: A basement in Shoreditch, East London

IN THE MAKING: Two days shooting, three weeks editing and postproduction

CAMEO: Riz Maslen (Neotropic)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Roots Manuva's Jamaican-cadenced rhymes and a female mad scientist's underground beat-tinkering make buildings shake and the sky change colors.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S MOUTH: "My inspiration comes from the weirdo page of the newspaper—stories about a guy shagging a chicken in Spain when a rock fell on him."



Mr. Manuva

Dusty circa 1970



Dusty Springfield

1939–1999

One of pop music's most shatteringly soulful voices was stilled when Dusty Springfield died on March 2 at age 59 after a long battle with breast cancer. From her first hit, 1964's "I Only Want To Be With You," to her last, the 1987 Pet Shop Boys collaboration, "What Have I Done to Deserve This?," Dusty has indeed waxed sensual singles. England's unofficial ambassador of R&B, Springfield was instrumental in importing the Motown Revue to London in 1965. In 1968, she teamed with Artha Franklin's producers to create her masterpiece, *Dusty in Memphis*, featuring her iconic "Son of a Preacher Man." On March 15, the songstress became England's first female inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Too bad she had to miss the party.

David Cohen

SLANGUISTICS

Breaking down the
new rap language

EAT YOUR FOOD. To stab with intent to kill; to attack. Tingly Khadafi, on the track "Eye to Eye" (from his new album, *Against All Odds*), spits, "Get your fuckin' weight up, nigga...eat your food, nigga." Originates from the Blood term "eating," meaning "to slash with a razor," commonly used in prison. May derive from the prison practice of stronger inmates forcibly taking others' rations. Spun off from 18th-century French queen Marie Antoinette's glib maxim "Let them eat cake," addressed to her starving subjects.

CAMEL



CAMEL LIGHTS

11 mg. "tar," nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.**

Bobbito plays the tracks. Wesley Snipes states the facts.

Wesley Snipes is from the Bronx and often attends the Rock Steady Crew Anniversary parties there. So I rolled with Crazy Legs from Rock Steady to Wesley's crib in Marina del Rey. Wesley bugged when he saw Legs and divulged that he himself was a dancer before he got into acting. I was a dancer too before I started spinning records and writing, so we all understood each other. Now, I got beef with Wesley over his role in *White Men Can't Jump* (20th Century Fox, 1992). He's a great actor, but a true ballplayer he's not. However, he was cool enough in person that I could forgive him.

The Shades of Love—"Keep in Touch (Body to Body)" (Venture, 1982)

W: Oh, shit! Money, this takes me back. "Keep in touch, body to body"—pweh!

B: You collect records?

W: Oh, yeah.

B: Did you spin back in the day?

W: That's how I got through college. I went to [State University of New York] Purchase. I used to deejay up there.

B: I imagine you were there when this record came out.

W: I'm 36 now. I'd try to get two copies of this to go: "Keep in touch," bring it back, "keep in touch." You forget how many times you've done it—you're trying to get it right and the crowd is like, "We're in touch already!"

B: Did you have a DJ nickname?

W: Yes the Best. I had the turntables that had rubber bands. I'd stretch it out and try to replace it with any old rubber band I could find. The pitch would be all off.

B: Did you make mix tapes?

W: I still do.

The BBoys—"Girls-Part 2" (Vintertainment, 1985)

W: The thing I like about this period was it was about rocking a party, not flexing on nobody. It wasn't about negativity. In my day it mattered if the girls were having a good time. Now [DJs] don't give a flying whatever.

B: I met this girl named Anna / from Louisiana / She don't want a man 'cuz / She uses a banana. / I like this record 'cause it makes me giggle.

W: I like "Hot Spot" by Foxy Brown, but I listened to her album, and it's like, how creative can you be with four-letter words at this point? Her ability is beyond what she showed on her album—at least I have faith that it is. An artist can do anything. So go there. Push the envelope of your imagination.

Johnny Guitar Watson—"Superman Lover" (This Record Company, 1976)

W: "Superman Lover," Johnny Guitar Watson.

B: You had this record?

W: Yeah, but I didn't play it when it was out. They would've started throwing shit at the DJ booth. If our parents knew that this stuff would be sampled later on, they would've never thrown them joints out. There'd be 78 rpm's up on the refrigerator!

B: You know how many stories I've heard of somebody's pops throwing out a collection? They leave it on the sidewalk, and a crackhead picks it up.

W: What's interesting is that its spirit may have influenced its longevity. It's the spirit that the artist put into it. It's forever.

Marlena Shaw—"Woman of the Ghetto" (Cadet, 1977)

W: Awww...ding ding ding ding ding.

B: This is my shit. Do you have this?

W: Nah, I know the track, though. Who is that?

B: Marlena Shaw.

W: I'm gonna write that down. 1977? I'm a little too young to be up on that. Six-minute cuts are beautiful. This is like the leopard-rug type of joint. The

smoking jacket with the velvet zodiac sexy signs and all the girls with their beautiful brown skin.

Eddie Palmieri—"Vamonos Pal Monte" (Tico, 1974)

W: The percussion in this brings out the warrior spirit in you. You feel imperial! Makes you feel macho, like you can take a girl dancing and swing her into your arms and say in a deep voice like Dracula, "I know you want me," and then throw her away! Cats in the Bronx would play this in their hatchback with a speaker in the back.

B: With the hatchback open in the dead of winter! What part of the Bronx are you from?

W: 167th and Boston Road, 3rd Avenue, Grand Concourse, 181st and Creston Avenue, White Plains Road, Castle Hill, 233rd Street and Murdoch Avenue, Gun Hill Road, Lafayette Avenue, Sound View. I was still living in the Bronx after my first two movies. For three months during the shoot they used to send a car to pick me up. After the movie wrapped I was back on the train. Brothers on the corner would clown like, "What happened to your car?"

Crazy Legs: How many times did you move? You must've been evicted a lot.

W: Yo, man, I was in a single-parent household; she was trying to do the best she could, you know what I'm saying, papa?

Always bet on black. Wesley takes Bobbito, no sweat.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NICOLE ROSENTHAL

CAMEL



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OUTSIDER ART

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PT Package Tampering

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OB Overdue Books

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V LIVE

CHRIS ROCK March 7, 1999 Paramount Theatre, Oakland

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS BROENING

Chris Rock, live? More like Blow Job: 101! From Monica and Hillary to gal pals and groupies, Rock—or “Pookie,” as old-school fans love to remember him—understands below-the-belt politics like his second head hates a teazen. Yes, ladies, Rock still

wears his wedding band, but that has nothing to do with where his mouth is at. A word to women coming to hear the comedy professor: Bring a pen and pad to take notes on how to please men.... Dr. Rock is on the mike!

Raqiyah Mays



Tougher Than Leather

A selected filmography of Yaphet Kotto

Player. Pimp. Handyman. Hardass. Actor Yaphet Kotto has deployed his unmistakably gritty voice and leonine countenance in all these guises over the course of a career that consists of more than 40 films, from his uncredited big-screen debut in the 1963 Frank Sinatra vehicle *4 for Texas*, to the role of Dickie Coombes in the 1980 prison-reform drama *Brubaker*, and his turn as a child psychologist in 1991's *Nightmare on Elm Street Part VI: Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*. Currently starring as Lieut. Al Giardello on NBC's *Homicide: Life on the Street*, Kotto, 62, maintains the tradition of classically trained actors like Paul Robeson, Marlon Brando, and Sidney Poitier by bringing an air of majesty to his characterizations.

The Thomas Crown Affair



(United Artists, 1968) **CHARACTER:** Carl, a thief hired by millionaire playboy Thomas Crown (Steve McQueen) **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Sticks down bystander's nose during bank robbery **QUOTEABLE:** Addresses uptight fellow robber as "Baby" **THREADS:** Sharp suit, Ray Ban-style shades, Fedora

Across 110th Street (United Artists, 1972) **CHARACTER:** Lieutenant Pope, a highly principled

Harlem homicide detective **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Pulls his out-of-control partner (Anthony Quinn)



off a suspect who won't talk **QUOTEABLE:** "Don't give me any of that 'brother' crap, I'm a police officer and I asked you a question!" **THREADS:** Navy blue business suit, striped tie, Buddy Holly glasses

Live and Let Die (United Artists, 1973) **CHARACTER:** Kananga, a.k.a. Mr. Big, leader of a New Orleans voodoo cult who plans on hooking the cat on heroin



RUFFNECK BUSINESS: Slices James Bond's (Roger Moore) arm and dangles him over a pool of sharks **QUOTEABLE:** "Any cost, any cost. Bond must die." **THREADS:** Antelope head worn as a crown

Truck Turner (American International, 1974) **CHARACTER:** Harvard kid, the newest pimp in town **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Has his henchmen hang Truck Turner's (Isaac Hayes) cat **QUOTEABLE:** "The sky's better to open up on your head. Better retire, take a vacation,



Baaaad lieutenant: Kotto in *Homicide* mode

lay on a beach for about 90 years." **THREADS:** White overcoat with brown fur collar, ebony cane with gold handle

Friday Foster (Orion, 1975)

CHARACTER: Colt Hawkins, a private eye tailing cheating spouses **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Kills hitman Yarbko (Carl Weathers) during rooftop shoot-out to save Friday Foster (Pam Grier) **QUOTEABLE:** "So you're out of the slammer! How was the bread and water?"



THREADS: Indigo leisure suit, orange suede jacket

Blue Collar (T.A.T. Communications, 1978) **CHARACTER:** Smokey James, who works in a Detroit-area auto plant alongside

Zeke Brown (Richard Pryor) and Jerry Bartowski (Harvey Keitel) **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Beats two union henchmen with a bat; suffocates in paint chamber when kilofit traps him inside **QUOTEABLE:** "They pit the lifers against the new boys, the young against the old, the black against the white. Everything they do is to keep us in our place."



THREADS: DIZZY GILLESPIE FOR PRESIDENT T-shirt

Alien (20th Century Fox, 1979)

CHARACTER: Parker, a deckhand aboard interstellar mining ship *The Nostromo* **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Bashes the Android Ash (Ian Holm) into pieces; gets dismembered by the Alien, leaving Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) alone on board **QUOTEABLE:** "Before we dock, I think

we ought to discuss the bonus situation." **THREADS:** Standard-issue



pea green T-shirt, *Nostromo* crew work shirt with insignia patches, royal blue bandanna

The Running Man (TriStar, 1987) **CHARACTER:** Laughlin, a prison escapee coerced into appealing alongside Ben Richards (Arnold Schwarzenegger) on popular game-show-to-the-death *The Running Man* **RUFFNECK BUSINESS:** Breaks security guard's neck during jailbreak; as *Running Man* contestant, gets hatched by chainsaw and left for dead **QUOTEABLE:** "Don't let us die for nothing.... I don't want to be the only asshole in heaven." **THREADS:** Red-and-gray nylon tracksuit

Steven Knevezich

HARD KNOCK NEWS

EXIT A DRU On March 18, James "Woody" Green announced his departure from multiplatinum R&B group Dru Hill and plans to start a solo gospel career. Reportedly, a fan decided not to commit suicide after hearing Woody sing "We want you to know we need you" on "Nowhere Without You" from *Enter the Dru* (Island, 1998). "If I can inspire here by doing secular music, I can inspire even more people if I'm really singing the

gospel," Green said. Dru Hill will be performing as a trio when they tour this spring with Faith Evans and Total.

THE LOST BOY'S FREAKY TALK BLAM "Never got shot / Never ever caught a case / You talk behind my back / But then you smile in my face."

—Freaky Tah, "Get Your Hustle On" (1997)

Six weeks after the murder of Big L, another rap artist has met with a sudden end. Raymond Rogers, 28, better known as hype man Freaky Tah of the Lost



Freaky Tah

Boyz, was shot once in the head by a masked assailant while leaving a party in Queens on March 28. In 1998 the *Lost Boyz*' debut, *Legal Drug Money* (Universal), debuted at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Top R&B chart. *LB for Life*, the follow-up to their sophomore album, *Love, Peace and Nappiness*, is completed, although its release date has been indefinitely postponed. The forthcoming *Lost Boyz* music will be a painful reminder of a life cut too short. Rogers leaves behind a son, daughter, and fiancé.

Day Lee

LOS ANGELES



ON FEBRUARY 16, 1999, LAPD OFFICERS SPOT OL' DIRTY BASTARD

exiting his double-parked car wearing body armor. ODB is arrested according to California's one-month-old James Guelfi Body Armor Act: "Any person who has been convicted of a violent felony...who purchases, owns, or possesses body armor...is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in state prison for 16 months, or two or three years."

"This law is a way to mitigate violence in the community. It was quite a coincidence that its first violator was ODB. But it's very important to know the laws of each state. The law does provide a provision where any convicted felon who feels that they need to wear body armor can approach a law enforcement official to receive a permit."

—Scott Wildman, California state assemblyman

"Anyone who's been shot at as many times as [ODB] should be able to protect himself. No one believes that he was wearing a vest to rob banks." —Peter Frankel, ODB's attorney

"Three out of every four times that Los Angeles police officers fire their weapons, superiors fault them for potentially life-threatening mistakes that warrant re-training or discipline."

—The Los Angeles Times, August 14, 1994

"The evidence is indisputable that, compared to the general population distributions, persons of color are disproportionately represented among those subjected to police use of force where the discharge of a firearm is involved[.]"

—Police Violence (Human Rights Watch, 1998), edited by Geller and Toch

"No one in this country has ever been killed by a bullet-proof vest alone. They've made possession of a vest like possession of a controlled substance. What the cops want is no static. When they point a gun at you, they want you to be terrified."

—Anthony Thompson, professor of clinical law, New York University

money to outfit the NYPD with body armor. 1964: Oakley Inc. introduces EyeShades, the first pair of sunglasses with Plutonite lenses, capable of withstanding a 1/4" steel ball fired at 102 mph.

1981: Stanley Kubrick premieres his Vietnam War-epic, *Full Metal Jacket*.

1988: AlliedSignal Inc. introduces Spectra Shield, bringing comfort to concealable vests with the flexible, non-woven composite material.

1995: DuPont introduces Kevlar Correc-



tional, a puncture-resistant material to protect correctional officers from prison-made shanks.

September 7, 1998: Tupac Shakur is fatally shot in Las Vegas. He had left his ballistic vest in his room at the Luxor Hotel.

PROTECT YA' NECK

Counteracting gunfire in the real world

BULLET-PROOF FAST FOOD

During daylight hours at the Kentucky Fried Chicken at the corner of Frederick Douglas Boulevard and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (125th Street) in Harlem, food is served over the counter. But after dark, 1 1/4"-thick shutters of bullet-resistant glass (actually a polycarbonate plastic) are pulled down and food is passed to customers through a \$1,700 "package pass-through unit." Because the glass also keeps out sound, employees and customers communicate via Intercom.

BULLET-RESISTANT RIDE

Level A4 armor protection against Uzis, .44 Magnums, and other handguns) increases the weight of a Jeep Grand Cherokee by about 1,100 pounds. The cost of armoring such a low-profile vehicle (body armor not visible to the naked eye) is \$59,364 from Alpine Armoring in Herndon, Va. Alpine offers additional options like smoke screen, oil slick, and electric door handles for between \$1,300 and \$2,500. Gun ports cost \$400 per door.



BALLISTIC VEST

While it is possible to get a Kevlar lining stitched into clothes, the lining can tend to make a suit "slouch" (lose its shape). Most body-armor salespeople, like Skip Greene at New Century Body Armor in Plantation, Fla., instead recommend buying a single ballistic vest (costing up to \$790) that can be worn under any outfit and provides protection against firepower up to a .44 Magnum.



Alpine's Crowd Control Truck

VIBE confidential.1

FINAL VERDICT

ON THE **BEST** AND **WORST** DRESSED STARS IN HIP HOP

Dear readers, behind these "etoile" diamond-studded Ray Bans, your devoted **VC** has been struck blind! If **VC**'s vision doesn't return soon, we'll be crawling to Andrea Bocelli's agent for a new career. The culprit? Television. Just like you, **VC**'s been glued to our vibrating Sloth-Y-Gents, hypnotized by all these award shows: Grammys, Oscars, Emmys, *Espys*, *Essence*, *Lady of Soul*, *Soul Train*, Soul Globes, Soulbusters, Independent Soul Awards... the horror! But while we can't even remember who won what, we have been *blinded* by bad taste: tube tops, Disney sweaters, and baggy leather! While we recuperate, here's our first annual **VC** Style Awards (Mr. Blackwell, kiss our ghetto-fab ass!)

The Beefcake/Cheesecake Award: or the Mighty Healthy Award, goes to **Treash**, who we'd naturally love to get naughty with; **Luke's** new female rapper, **Jiggie** (yes, that's her on the *Lizard*, *Lizard CD*); and producer **Stevie J**, who needs to lift weights when your Rolex is that heavy? These stars make you want to hit the gym—or hit someone. Honorable mention: **BET's Big Lez**, who will kick all our asses.

The Spring Chicken Award: for being Easter Sunday—sharp all year round, goes to **Gerald Levert**, a true playa from the Himalayas (check the perfectly groomed beard and the purple pators); and **Lil' Kim**, who color-coordinates everything from her platinum hair to her diamonds and her white pedicure. Honorable mention: **Puff Daddy** and almost every player in the NBA.

The Animal Cruelty Award: goes to **Mase**, a.k.a. **Mason "I Murdered Tiger, Tony, and Simba for this suit" Batha**, **Master P**, who thought that by wearing an anacoona he'd get a crack at **Jenny Lopez** too ("Damn you, Puffy!"); and **Tamla**, who looked like a cross between **Morris Day** and **Chester the Cheetos** Chaatah. Honorable mention: **Foxy Brown's** My Little Pony-tail weave.

The Dressed to Ill Award: goes to **Jermaine Dupri** and "Honey, I Shrunk the" **Usher Raymond**. Hay, falas: If you usa up all the velvet, what will we paint on?; **Chris Smith** from **Kris Kross** (this is a historic moment—**VC** is speechless!); **Malcolm & Eddie's** **Eddie Griffin** (even his scantily clad friends tried to cover up that leather *Smurf* suit), and note to **Da Brat**: Out of all the outfits to raid, **JD's** closet far, for you picked that one? Honorable mention: everyone on **BET ComicView**.



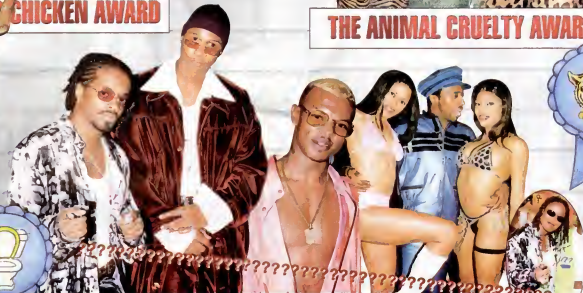
THE BEEFCAKE/CHEESECAKE AWARD



THE ANIMAL CRUELTY AWARD



THE SPRING CHICKEN AWARD



THE DRESSED TO ILL AWARD





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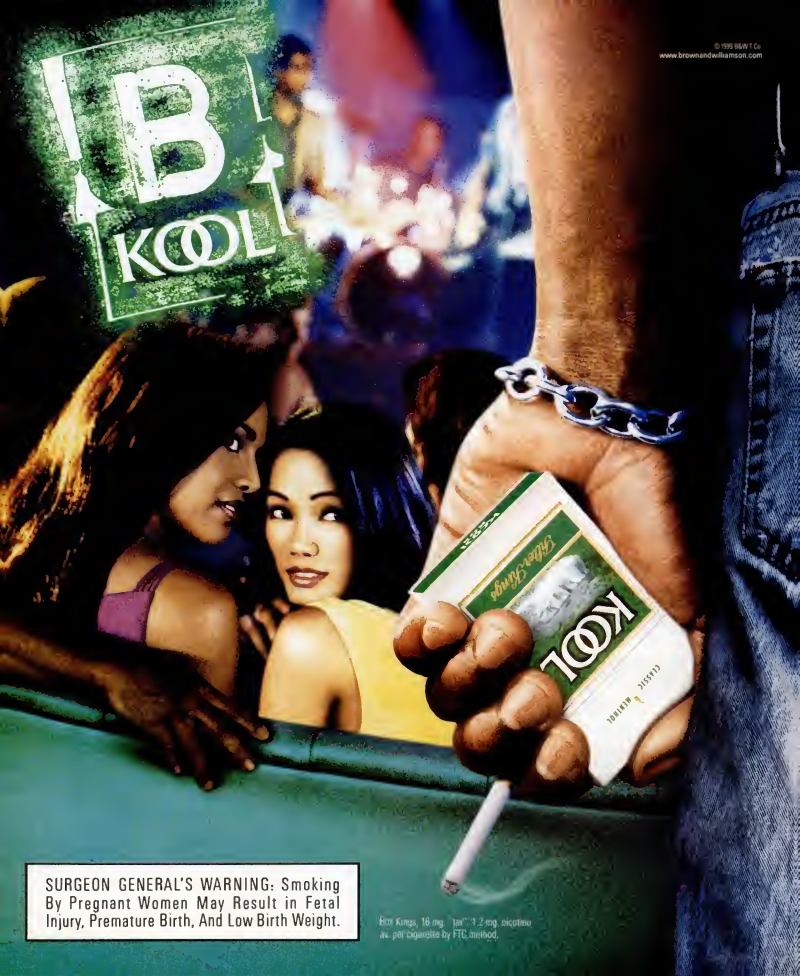
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KOOL Lights, 16 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

special in the mix

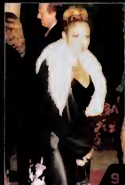
Arista's Pre-Grammy Jam!



1. Arista Records president Clive Davis knows how to throw a party. Lots of giddy VIPs filled the Beverly Hills Hotel's Crystal Ballroom. (Left to right) Cissy Houston, Monica, Faith Evans, Kelly Price, Whitney Houston, Deborah Cox, and Shanice pay homage to their label daddy. 2. DJ Quik stuck to Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins like glue. Quik can't go wrong collaborating with the hit-making producer, who's lending his expertise to Michael Jackson's new joint. 3. All in the family: Faith Evans gives us Marilyn Monroe flavor as she cozies up to label mates 112. 4. We were not surprised to see Jerry Seinfeld representin'. Wherever the cool people were, so was he. Could it be that Jerry "Jigga" Seinfeld is considering a second career in the rap game? 5. P Diddy's hair waves are enough to make us dizzy, but talk-show host Donny Osmond maintains



as the Puffster pitches a hip hop remix of Donny and Marie's "A Little Bit Country, a Little Bit Rock and Roll." 6. OutKast's Big Boi looks smooth, but what was Dre (who rocked a set-and-go) thinking? We're not med, though, because the southern duo keep us bouncin'. 7. Carlos Santana is damn near speechless. He thanks Clive Davis before giving an awesome performance. 8. Naughty by Nature may be new to the A-team, but these rap veterans effortlessly get the crowd riled up. 9. The Boogaloo Bronx Fly Girl-turned-actress-turned singer Jennifer Lopez is in the house looking quite chic. Mamacita must be over all the talk about her (a)ssets, so she keeps them covered nicely. 10. (Left to right) Mase, Shanice, Faith Evans, Deborah



Cox, and Usher definitely win for best coordination. If it's a freakish coincidence, we love it! 11. All hail the Queen! Mary J. Blige is cornered by producer/songwriters Soulshock (right) and Kerlin (who produced Whitney Houston's single "Heartbreak Hotel"). Her next album is rumored to be released in August—and thank goodness! We desperately need a Mary fix.

Kenye N. Byrd

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN WILLIAMS

VIDEO 79

special in the mix too

A B.I.G. Benefit



On March 30, Voletta Wallace, VIBE Ventures CEO/President Keith Clinkscales, and P Diddy hosted the first benefit dinner for the Christopher Wallace Memorial Foundation, Inc. The foundation donates books, computers, and other educational materials to New York City's needy schools and daycare centers.

1. There's nothing but positivity and love in the air as (left to right) Lil' Kim, Money L from Junior M.A.F.I.A., Puftly, Biggie's former road manager D-Roc, Faith, and Ms. Wallace give a high-spirited performance of "I'll Be Missing You." 2. Puftly's mom, Janice Combs (left), and Ms. Wallace politic while strengthening their maternal ties. 3. P Diddy knows his boy Russell Simmons doesn't do black-tie attire, but it's all good. Simmons donated two \$500 Phat Farm gift certificates to the evening's raffle. 4. Loud Records, home of hardcore acts like Wu-Tang, just signed its first gospel group, 5 Young Men Trust, when these brothers sing "Praying Time," folks drop to their knees. 5. Hot 97 DJ Ed Lover, the night's master of ceremonies, keeps everyone cracking up, especially when he targets the Junior M.A.F.I.A. clique: "Junior M.A.F.I.A. is in suits, and they don't even have to go to court!" 6. Donald "Big Daddy Bucks" Trump is down with Puftly and the rap game, so we're never surprised to see him representing, especially with his new lady, Melania Knauss. 7. Virginia's leading homegirl, Missy Elliott, enjoys the gala. 8. Bethann Hardison, the sister who discovered supermodel Tyson, may be recruiting a new client—Shine, the newest Bad Boy, who sounds hauntingly like the late Big Poppa. 9. Mary J. Blige still can't believe she won one of the three specially designed leather Avirex jackets lined with a flick of B.I.G. Definitely a collector's item! 10. Baby Boy Mase is in the best of spirits! That smile with those dimples says, We'll always love Big Poppa. K.N.B.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE TOREM-CRAIG



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special in the mix three

Soooooul Train!



1. After making history by winning five Grammys and snagging four trophies at the *Soul Train* Music Awards in Los Angeles, Lauryn Hill knocks all competition out the box. 2. Lord Tariq and Peter Gunz show Tia and Tamera Mowry how to do the Uptown shuffle. 3. Oh, happy day! Luther Vandross and Whitney Houston are giddy beyond recognition. We suppose that phat Alto in Whitney's mouth means that fresh breath is equally important as strong vocal cords. 4. Jermaine Dupri looks like he's recruiting Regina King for a spot in his next video. Perhaps she'll star as his wife. Now that Urkel, oops, Jaleel White has shed the high-waters and nasal voice, his taste in women has changed. He snuggles up to pal Big Lez. When the *Soul Train* comes around, the freaks come out! Wu-Tang's Power (far right) helps himself to an unidentified, body-painted go-go dancer at the Def Jam party, held at L.A.'s House of Blues. Although Tyson is a good-looking brother, why does he look like a long-lost cast member from *The Dukes of Hazard*? Girl power! (left to right) Amelle Simpson, Nia Long, sisters Reina and Regina King, and Vivica A. Fox brought the ruckus at West Hollywood's SkyBar. We can only imagine how a ladies' night out with Hollywood's dopest sistahs might go down. Kirk Franklin and wife have to be the cutest couple in gospel! And they're looking so very chic. R. Kelly, who shared the Sammy Davis Jr. award for Entertainer of the Year with Lauryn Hill, offers the members of Next a few pointers on women and love.

K.N.B.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN WILLIAMS

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expressing—
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phrasing,
the
rhythm—is
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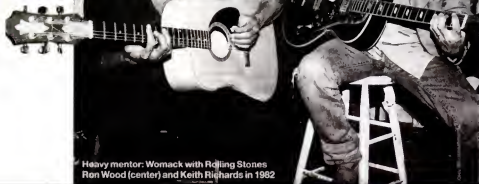
Remember Pam Grier gliding through the opening scene of Jackie Brown to the tune of "Across 1100th Street"? That jam's high-flying tenor belongs to none other than Bobby Womack, who originally wrote and recorded the song in 1972 for the United Artists film of the same name. Known for other classics like "Woman's Gotta Have It" (United Artists, 1972) and "If You Think You're Lonely Now" (Beverly Glen, 1981), this Cleveland-raised singer/songwriter/guitarist is a cornerstone of R&B. Anyone who appreciates R. Kelly's lusty cries or the gruff embellishments of K-Ci Hailey has tasted the Womack energy.

Womack has vibed with artists from Jackie Wilson to Jimi Hendrix to the Rolling Stones to the Roots. He was a sideman for both Sam Cooke and Ray Charles before going on to sell more than 3 million albums worldwide with his solo efforts *The Poet* (Beverly Glen, 1981) and *The Poet II* (Beverly Glen, 1984). Currently completing work on *All Things Heal in Time*, an album featuring collaborations with Johnny Mabris, Gerald Levert, and Yenna Marie, and set for release later this year, Womack, 55, is a gregarious talker—and a teller of secrets.

When I was 7, me and my five brothers opened up for Sam Cooke. When I was 8, a white record producer, who was active on the Cleveland music scene, told me, "I'd like you all to sing rock 'n' roll." My father said, "They sing gospel." The producer gave him \$3,000. We cut a record called "Buffalo Bill Was a Runaway Slave."

GOTTA HAVE IT

Bobby Womack
as told to Brent Fason



Heavy mentor: Womack with Rolling Stones
Ron Wood (center) and Keith Richards in 1982

"I'm not in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Jackie Wilson, James Brown, Otis Redding, Al Green, and Marvin Gaye are stuffed in there like sardines."

I've known Aretha Franklin all my life. I saw her sister Carol teaching her "Ain't No Way." And I was sitting there weighing 115 pounds with a cigarette in my mouth, coaching her. She came back from the studio once and said, "Somebody made me cut 90 tracks over and over again, but I know that when I sing it the first time it's like a baby being born, you can't push it back up in." Aretha's always been very bashful. She had a big crush on Sam Cooke.

Me and Gerald Levert's dad, Eddie (Levert of the O'Jays'), grew up together, but I didn't know Gerald as a child. Back then people kept family to themselves. The first time I worked with Gerald was three weeks ago on a song for my album. I was shocked. I said, "Eddie's son sounds just like him!" We'll go on tour together this September.

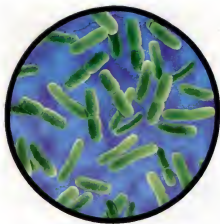
I am hooked on music like some people are hooked on crack. Louis Armstrong once told me, "Find something you love to do, and you'll never work a day in your life. Get paid to bring the party." I ain't leavin' until I get even. □

START

The next day the producer came back and said, "Bad news. Someone broke into my studio last night and stole all your masters." Later, the record came out but we couldn't tell nobody it was because the name on the record was different. Forty years later, this same producer gets me on the phone and says, "I'm dying of cancer. God says I robbed you ghetto kids of having a dream. I'm going to send you the master tape." I got the tape and it had 1954. THE WOMACK BROTHERS, MANAGER: FRIENDLY WOMACK on the original box.

In 1962, my group, the Valentinos, was recording on Sam Cooke's label, Sar. In '64, Sam said, "I need a song that'll break pop," so I gave him "It's All Over Now." Then Sam came to me and said, "There's an English group called the Rolling Stones; they're not known over here yet, but you should let 'em record that song." At that time, the Stones didn't know they could write. I kept saying, "Let 'em get their own song. These white boys are always Pat Boone-ing and waiting until we get something out, and then they take it." Sam said, "Bobby, I'm trying to tell you in a nice way that they're gonna record this song." Their record came out (London, 1964) and went No. 1. When I received the first check from the Stones, I'd never seen money like that—\$250,000. The Rolling Stones—we all became close friends. I talked to them the other day and they said, "You're opening up for us in Cleveland. We're going to make a statement: Why is Bobby Womack not in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame?" Cleveland's a city I built, but I'm not in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Jackie Wilson, James Brown, Otis Redding, Al Green, and Marvin Gaye are stuffed in there like sardines.

Charley Pride impressed me because here was the first black I knew singing country and western, and the world was prejudiced more than it is now. In '76 I recorded a country-western album. United Artists flipped out because I wanted to call this album *Step Aside Charley Pride, Give Another Nigger a Try*. The album became *BW Goes Co'W*. And



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—T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 1935

Our ongoing research into dangerous knowledge recently uncovered the following account: During the early 1940s, the I.G. Farben Chemical Company employed a Polish salesman who also worked as a chemist in the manufacture of poisonous gas. This same cyanide gas, along with Zyklon B and Malathion, was used to exterminate millions of Jews and other unfortunates in Nazi death camps across Europe. Their bodies were burned to ashes in huge ovens. After the war the salesman, fearing for his life, joined the Catholic Church and was ordained a priest in 1946. He traveled to the States in 1979, where one of his closest friends was Dr. Wolf Szmunes, the mastermind behind certain health-related experiments said to have loosed the plague of AIDS upon the American people. According to this account, the salesman returned home and was ordained Poland's youngest bishop in 1958. After a 34-day reign his predecessor was assassinated, and our ex-gas salesman assumed the papacy as Pope John Paul II.

Imagine that! If this "account" were correct, the Pope would be the most dangerous man alive. Since when did the "land of the tree and the home of the slave" allow criminals to grow big and strong? Since George Washington Columbus! The Pope didn't invent

COVERT OPZ

camouflage—and anybody can use its deceptive power to conceal affiliations.

"You can learn a lot from Satan," someone once said. The Antichrist may not be a true man of respect, but he is a true gangster. He doesn't roll with a loud bunch of half-wits. His crew doesn't need bandannas and a box-cutter to get a reputation. They've got more guns than the ghetto's ever seen, yet you'll never see them pull out nothing but information. His gang stays discreet. Let me spell it out for you: *Gang members who still wear colors are stupid!* Y'all brothers and sisters are too important to your families and your community to be captured. Everybody knows who you're with! In the coming conflict, camouflage doesn't begin with what you wear. This is how to prepare.

All overt members and affiliates: Burn your fingertips periodically. Apply for city, state, and federal jobs. Infiltrate. Try for something in the court system, any post where there's information you can get and disperse to other thugs. All you felons who sell drugs because you can't make an honest wage due to your criminal past, just do what so many other reprobates have done: Change your name! Not just your identity, but your persona. Keep your affiliations a closely guarded secret like a Masonic handshake. If every member of the Bloods, Crips, Netas, Latin Kings, and La Primera followed this strategic counsel, tomorrow's leaders could completely reform and restructure today's society!

I cannot even begin to outline the financial empire controlled by the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the Council on Foreign Relations. Which unseen council controls and launders the money from drugs and other proprietary ventures carried out by the shadowy "intelligence community"? I can give you one example of a highly successful covert operation. On February 8, 1990, ABC's *Evening News* carried a report regarding the Congressional testimony of Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), who complained that U.S.-based oil companies were not being regulated in the shipment of chemicals

TUPH STREET

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

by bönz malone



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL DALLAS FOR VIBE

Keep yourself adaptable and on the move. The best way to protect yourself is to be as fluid and formless as water.

necessary for the production of illegal drugs. Two of these chemicals, acetone and ether, were being sent to Latin America by the chemical affiliates of major U.S. oil companies. Who let the goods go south with full knowledge of their only possible commercial application?

Covert ops such as these aren't half-planned at all. Those who implement them have become masters in abstract and multidimensional strategies. Above all, they understand the power of *omerta* (silence). By taking a shape, by having a visible plan, you open yourself to attack. Playing name games with strangers only provides a form for your enemy to grasp. Keep yourself adaptable and on the move. Bragging about who you know can get you offed. The best way to protect yourself is to be as fluid and formless as water. Never bet on stability or lasting order. Everything changes. Things fall apart.

As national consigliere and made member of the Inmate Council, I motion that we adopt the example of Attila, King of the Huns, who accepted criminals from all families who desired to be free from the tyrannical grip of Caesar's Rome. Or Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and all those who formed the Zulu Nation and the Rock Steady Crew in hopes that the political warfare in the ghetto could become less violent and more cerebral. It worked. For 20 years and counting, our thing has affected most ideas in all industries, while we remain America's Least Noticed.™



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NEXT

PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE

DJ RAP Packin' white-hot beats

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
DANNY CLINCH

Twenty years after the birth of dance music, some fools still wonder whether interest in the genre has peaked. But British dance DJ and producer DJ Rap isn't worried. "This is an established form," she says while resting in her East London flat. "I personally don't ever want to see [dance] becoming cheesy chart music, d'youknowwhamean?"

DJ Rap, born Charissa Saverio, started out as a teenage topless model, but quickly rejected that lifestyle. "I was young and naïve when I did it," she says. "I'd be lying if I said I didn't dread the fact that every cunt's gonna get a picture and jack off to it," she adds, laughing. Determined to avoid a "normal" 9 to 5, Rap, 30, decided to work alongside men rather than titillate them. She chose a career in music and soon went from being a solo artist to a club DJ to a record producer. It's a journey other dance-music icons, such as Goldie and Roni Size, have also taken. But what's so striking about Rap's position as one of the U.K.'s leading female DJs is that the Italian/Irish/Malaysian beauty

grew up in the Far East. She wasn't even exposed to popular culture (her background is solely classical) until she returned to the U.K. as a teen.

Rap's American debut, *Learning Curve* (Higher Ground/Bony), due out in May, elucidates her life's journey. It's as much a testament to her individual maturation as to the evolution of dance. Self-written, arranged, mixed, and produced, *Learning* contains sweeping orchestration and techno flavor, and is occasionally offset with cocksure vocals. In the 12 years DJ Rap has been on the scene, dance has developed

from its house and garage nucleus into techno, jungle, hardcore, drum 'n' bass, trip hop, and speed garage. Rap knows that dance deserves its reputation as England's most exciting musical export since punk. And she's pouring her blood into the preservation of the ever-changing art form. "No DJ on the scene is just a DJ," Rap explains.

"Everyone lives, breathes, and shits music. But the freedom to write what I want without any barriers is what inspires me." And the beat goes on and on.

Jacqueline Springer



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911 TO THE RESCUE

INFAMOUS SYNDICATE Sexy minds, intelligent rhymes

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN MANNION

Every year somebody's gonna come up with a new way to be sexy," says Rashawna Guy, 21, the rowdy half of Chicago rap duo Infamous Syndicate. Poised on a kitchen stool in their co-manager's South Chicago home, Shawwna, daughter of legendary blues guitarist Buddy Guy, has no trouble expressing her opinion about women who exploit their sexuality to succeed in hip hop. "A man ain't gon' look at you half naked and think, 'Boy she got a pretty brain,'" she says with a husky laugh. "Let me be that one you wonder what I look like when I get sexy."

Turning her gaze away from a living room TV set flashing *The Jerry Springer Show*, 20-year-old Lateefa Harland, Shawwna's low-key partner in rhyme, chimes in. "I always say it's in a woman's nature to be sexy. But to totally rely on it—that's not what we're about."

It's not that Shawwna and Teeffa don't ooze round-the-way sex appeal. But it's their exceptional emceeing—not their hot-spot Gucci-wear—that makes headz turn. While Shawwna snipes rapid-fire rhymes, Teeffa's flow is subtler. Think of her as the Jigga to Shawwna's DMX.

"I was intimidated [when meeting Teeffa] because I knew she rapped too," Shawwna says, recalling Teeffa's 16th birthday party, where the pair first met. But instead of becoming competitors, the women formed a lyrical tag team and began performing in area barber shops. In 1996, Infamous Syndicate became Chitown's biggest unsigned hype when their then independent single "Jenny Jones" flooded a local radio station's request line.

Just three years later, Syndicate released their banging debut, *Changing the Game (Relativity)*, this March, and their amped first single, "Here I Go," their only track that beckons the listener to bounce and big-up God at the same time, is riding up the charts. "Women can do the same things as men," says Shawwna. "That's what we say in our music. We're not trying to be what you think we should be. We're tryin' to be who we are."

Tracy E. Hopkins

next
PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE

Rashawna, Lateefa (foreground)

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NEXT

PEOPLE
ON THE
VERGE

DAVE HOLLISTER *Ruffneck soul*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SUSAN SHACTER

FEBRUARY 25, 1999, GRAMERCY PARK,
NEW YORK CITY

He earned his stripes singing backup for the likes of Patti LaBelle, Mary J. Blige, Tupac, and Usher, and gained a rep as one fourth of Blackstreet. But singer/songwriter Dave Hollister secretly dreams of a world beyond R&B. Just like an actor who yearns to direct, or a model who desires to act, Hollister aspires to be something other than what he is. "If I could rap, I would be a rap artist," the thirtysomething Chi-Town native says, idly stabbing his fork into a dish of peach cobbler. "Erick Sermon always calls me a rapper trapped in an R&B singer's body 'cause of the way that I write." Hollister smiles broadly, his eyes as bright as the diamonds glistening on his fingers and around his wrist. "I think I lean more towards hip hop than R&B," he says. "But I know I can't rhyme."

Not that it has slowed him down any. On his long-awaited solo collection, *Ghetto Hymns* (Def Squad/DreamWorks), Hollister takes his longtime love affair with rap to a new level. Part of the hip hop feel that *Ghetto Hymns* invokes comes via Hollister's association with the aforementioned Green-Eyed Bandit. The former member of EPMD and current titan of Def Squad coexecutive-produced *Ghetto Hymns*, the first CD to be released on Sermon's joint venture with DreamWorks. But much of the credit belongs to Hollister himself, who marries his soaring gospel-stoked tenor to some toughish-ruggish lyrics and rough-and-ready content. Case in point: tracks like the bouncing "Come in the Door Pimpin'" (featuring Too Short) and the first single, "Babymamadrama." A little Springer-style slice of life, "Babymamadrama" is, in its coarse, no-shorts way, the antithesis of the sensitive, pleading, down-on-my-knees love-man ethos. "No begging. We been there, done that," Hollister says. "Guys always making albums for women, but nobody looks out for us, know what I'm saying?" Hollister represents ghetto life and love when he steps to the mike. "I'd explain my album as being an R&B Jay-Z album." Hey, smooth singers can lead hard-knock lives too. *Amy Linden*



Just because hot fashion designer Byron Lars is branching out into handbags, furs and hats doesn't mean he's lost his flair for the basics, as proven by these soft-as-butter leather pants. Stunning all by themselves, you'll be happy to know they also work well with a wide range of tops. Accessories by Misha McGlowen. Hair by African Pride.

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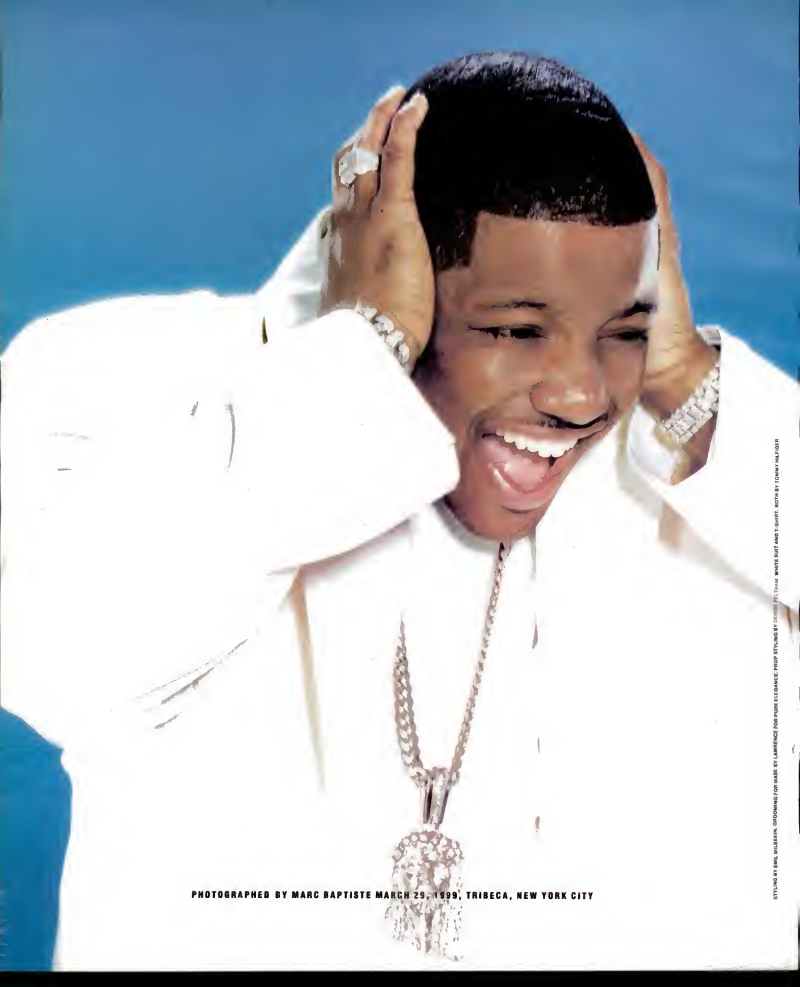
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PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BAPTISTE MARCH 29, 1999, TRIBECA, NEW YORK CITY

Three years ago, folks in the world called Harlem knew him as "Murder." But when Sean "Puffy" Combs waved his magic wand—and after the poof of blunt smoke cleared—a cute and cuddly Mason "Mase" Betha appeared. But now, with his *Double Up* disc, the dimpled Bad Boy returns to burn lyrically with the street-corner stylings that used to blaze his days and illuminate his nights. *Minya Oh* finds out why can't nobody smudge his shine.

state of mase

1995: Summertime in Harlem, USA. Back then, be it sneaker pimpin' at Dr. Jay's, snackin' at greasy spoon Pan Pan's, or trolling down Seventh Avenue during the African-American Day Parade, it wasn't hard to spot 17-year-old Mason "Mase Murder" Betha (also known as, "Murder Mase"); folks had grown accustomed to seeing the gregarious rap star—to be blend into Uptown Manhattan's popular spaces and places.

But it was hard for around-the-way folks to remain nonchalant when that same young Casanova got hold of a microphone. As "Murder," Betha was tearing up mix-tape freestyles and amateur showcases with fellow up-and-coming partners in rhyme like the Lox, DMX, McGruff, Big L (God bless the dead), and Children of the Corn—a crew consisting of Mase, Killla "Cam'ron" Cam, and their late friend Bloodshed (God bless the dead). Betha's name rang bells. In 1996, Harlem locals were proud to hear that Sean "Puffy" Combs had signed Murder to Bad Boy Records on the strength of one freestyle.

Even though he was no longer Murder but Mase when he debuted on some R&B shit for 112's "Only You" remix, the Kid stepped out in the video next to the Notorious B.I.G., holdin' hands with Keisha from Total, Avirex-ed down, standing in front of a Hummer in the middle of Times Square. And killin' it with: "Now you can hum all you want to, cum all you want to / Money I'm a front you, girl I wanna flaunt you..." It was a beautiful thing.

And even though he was no longer rappin' about bloodshed and drug-lord drama, Uptown, Downtown, 'Crosstown, and every other town was loving Mase when he led Puff through the superproducer's first rap song, 1997's "Can't Nobody Hold Me Down." We loved Mase on B.I.G.'s 1997 "Mo Money, Mo Problems," and it was dope to see him partying up in Las Vegas for his own debut single, 1997's "Feels So Good." More than 4 million of us loved him enough to pick up his 1997 debut LP, *Harlem World* (Bad Boy). Maybe it was Mase's rap-along/slow-as-molasses flow. Or the comical

party moves, the heart-stealing smile, those twinkling almond-shaped eyes. *Those dimples.* Whatever it was, the Kid was doing it—MTV, *Teen People*, sold-out tours, the minimum!

But the same things that spark a young girl's lust often spur a small man's hatred. "Why's he always cheesin'?" asked some. "Why's he always dancin'? Why's he getting all the shine on Biggie's song? Is he retarded? Is he gay? What's with the silver suits? *Playboy*, where the *Hummer* at?"

Walking into a bare-bones dressing room, while a packed Floss Angeles crowd awaits him outside, Mase, freshly dipped in yellow Timberlands and an Iceberg sweater, is relaxing with his Harlem World hype man, Huddy Combs (no relation to Puff), away from the fray. Tonight, the only parts of his wardrobe that are silvery are his diamond-infested platinum Rolex, basket-weave bracelet, and dangling Jesus piece. Outside the door, the scene is pure Hollywood: A screw-faced bodyguard stands at attention; Mase's new manager, Earvin "Magic" Johnson (yes, the Magic Johnson), presses the flesh like a true politician; buppies sap-rap to overdose notes; and a dookie-braided Kim "Tottie" Fields cuts deals while in the bathroom ("Call my agent," she says). Mase knows he's a long way from 133rd Street and Lenox Avenue, so he wears a dingy rubber band on his right wrist, he says, to remind him of where he came from.

And if you give Mase a minute of free time, he'll go back there. As soon as he's done performing at the club, he's right in the middle of the crowd, doin' "Da Butt" with every honey in reach. The next day, after making an uneventful appearance at the *Soul Train* Music Awards, Mase hops on a plane to go see his moms. And two days later, when he's finished with his VIBE shoot, all Mase wants to do is hang out with his "lif sisters" Tiana and Lisa—two budding basketball stars from Harlem. Mase pays their tuition at Laurinberg Institute, a boarding school in North Carolina. This is not Lauryn Hill's Refugee Project or The United Negro College Fund. This is personal. T and Lisa let Mase escape the rap game for a while; he gives them a future to work for. The Kid has grown into a man.

But even with all the opportunities that success brings, a few minutes with Mase (or a listen to his compelling new album, *Double Up*) will tell of the wear and tear of pop life and of his longing for the simpler times from back in the day. But *Double's* tales of lost friends and betrayal show that this MC is coming to terms with the fact that the world of Mase Murder is gone. ("It's like when I hurt, y'all laugh...I show people love and then they underhand me," he raps on "Same Niggas.") All of this makes one wonder: If you could make retirement money at the age of 19, travel the world, be linked to sex symbols, and take care of your entire family, would you put on that shiny suit too?

You've caught a lot of flack for the whole shiny-suit thing. Was the wardrobe change your idea? Was it a way to shed the Mase Murder image?

This is what happened: You got rappers that think they the best, lyrically. You have rappers that want to be the best performer; some that want to be the best storyteller. I just want to be like Michael Jackson—the best all-around entertainer. So when people don't consider me one of the best rappers, I don't get mad, 'cuz I'm not here to be the best rapper. If you're 're don't it for the 'hood, do it on the corner. This is show business. If you're tryin' to be in show business, gimme a show.

When we were on the "Mo Money, Mo Problems," video set, it was like, *We're gonna put the lights on this and we're wearing this*. I didn't go in there and say, "I can't wait to put that shiny suit on." [The director, Hype Williams,] had to explain it to me. He was like, "That's what's gonna come across better on TV. You could put on what you want to wear, but not everything that looks good in the 'hood looks good on TV." I don't think that the guy from OutKast dresses like that every day. I see Busta all the time; he don't always dress like that. Hype had Missy in a plastic bag, and [her album] sold a million copies. A man can't reach his peak if he's scared to experiment. It ain't like it was a miniskirt—it was a shiny suit. I said, "All right, just make it baggy, and gimme some [Nike] Air Ones."

Did it bother you that some rappers were dissing you because of your pop success?

One time I was chillin' with Nas and he was like, "Yo, don't ever let any of these niggas fool you. If they could have your success, they'd put that [shiny] shit on too." I don't pay none of that stuff no attention, 'cuz the real men that got a problem with you ain't goin' to be talking about it. That's point-blank. What Biggie and Pac had was a problem. With everything else that be going on, these are not problems. It's *just music*. Me and Cam don't got no problem. I see Cam, we shake hands, whatever, go our ways. It ain't no problem; if we did have a problem, when we saw each other there'd be fighting. Ain't no problem with me and Jay-Z. That's why all of this stuff is becoming redundant. I don't even want my name involved with nonsense like that.

So you never feel the need to respond to your detractors?

When everybody was dissin' me for a moment, like during the summer and all of that? I didn't really respond, but I thought about it.

How did you hold yourself back?

I think about all the people that depend on me. Whenever I'm about to do something really crucial,



STYLING: JESSICA WATSON; HAIR: JESSICA WATSON; MAKEUP: JESSICA WATSON; SHIRT: MICHAEL JACKSON; CHAIN: MICHAEL JACKSON; BOOTS: MICHAEL JACKSON; CHAIR: MICHAEL JACKSON; CHAIR: MICHAEL JACKSON



I think about everybody that benefits from what I do. I got seven nieces and nephews. I got six brothers and sisters, a mother and a father—and I take care of that whole family. Then I got Harlem World, and that's a whole *other* family to take care of. 'Cuz it's like, if you're gonna do something stupid, you're gonna be sittin' in jail like, I don't even belong here!

Like when Tupac went to jail...

That's when every black man realizes—the world don't stop for none of us! The world ain't stop for Biggie and Pac. Mase came up, DMX came up, Jay-Z came up. We can sit up here and cry and say how we love this nigga and that nigga, but if we're still gonna be doing the same stupid things, it's like, what are you saying as a man? How could we be doing something that two niggas got killed for doing? At one time we was all niggas just trying to come up. Whether you was in school or you was hustling. So how come we all get here, and then B.I.G. start doing this and Pac start doing that? You won't never see [Arista Records head] Clive Davis make a song about [Sony Music honcho] Tommy Mottola and dis everybody on his label. So what am I arguing about? It ain't like if I do this Clive Davis is gonna come out his house and say, "Niggas said this about Mase?!" He's not *thinking* about that. So you're fighting for somebody who ain't gonna fight for you.

How did you approach Double Up?

When I was writing this album, Puff said, "Yo, just open your heart and you won't have to worry about nothing. You'll sleep better." He didn't tell me this exactly, but I took it as whatever you say, you feel it. You want to do this, so do it. I wrote most of the album on the Hill [neighborhood in Harlem around 135th Street and Amsterdam Avenue]. I was just walking through the 'hood like, seven in the morning, just watching everybody going to school, cuttin' class, everything. It brought me back in touch with reality. Just seeing Big L get killed, it let me know that niggas still get murdered.

Would you say that you've lost touch with your old reality over the past two years because of all your success?

You wake up, people bring you your food. They come pick you up, train you—that type of lifestyle. Clothes laid out for you. "Oh, I want my feet washed"—whatever I want. So I had to step away from that, 'cuz once you lose touch with the 'hood, you're over with. But I remain just far enough away from the 'hood to be able to get where I need to go and not get caught up. That's my whole philosophy: right there with the 'hood, but in-between.

So you stay in between the 'hood and what? What is that next level that you aspire to reach?

I always said my dreams don't just consist of music. Music is my stepping stone. When you see me on TV, you can tell I got another personality besides music. I could be on TV gettin' \$100,000 a week because they're going to know I come with a soundtrack! That's what I want to do—music is just going to allow me to get there. All I need is 10 minutes with Jim Carrey or Will Smith. My 10 minutes gonna seem like 40! Some people, they got style but they're not good-looking. Or they good-looking and have no talent. I'm in-between—I got a little bit of looks to me and I got a little bit of talent. I got a face you could see on TV every day.

I know you also want to establish yourself as Mase, not just the rapper Mase or even Bad Boy's Mase. But will you

MASE ON WHAT HE WOULD BE WITHOUT PUFF: "The same thing Puff would be without Mase."



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is that I can't be more than one thing. Let me be hardcore and party and anything else. Because I am all those things at different times. I can be anything you want me to be.

But what do you want to be?

I just want to have that choice.

Did you feel like a lot of people didn't give you a choice with this album?

This album, a lot of people was fronting on Bad Boy. I feel like right now, nobody wanna see Puff do it again. So if I call somebody to sing on the song, it's like, "I don't know, I don't know." It wasn't about the money. It was something, but I don't know what it was. Everybody who asked me to get on their songs—

I did it. I was on everything.

Did that discourage you or make you more determined?

You can't live your life for everybody. You got to live your life for yourself and do whatever you can live with. With the whole Harlem World situation, that's my family! I don't care if they sell one record! That's my sister, my brother, and some niggas off the street. Regardless of what they make, it's more than what they had. Who cares? I got millions for it, and whatever! And even though their debut sales weren't all that, they ain't fall, they just stumbled. And I caught them. Now, it's on them to start running again. In the end, they'll win because I'm a winner.

Do you feel like you've achieved happiness?

Probably a month ago, I started being happy 'cause I just started analyzing happiness. People can't make you unhappy unless you allow them to do that. I realized that I can't look for no one else to make me happy. Whatever I say is my law.

Mase is my city, my state. Everybody is their own state. If a nigga disrespect Mase, he disrespecting my state. As the president of my state, I can let you slide, [or] I can give you a two-to-three. The State of Mase may say that you deserve a lynching. Or you might need parole. You might need two years isolation to think about it. Mase is my state. Can't nobody disrespect my state without dealing with the consequences. ■

MASE: Love him, or leave him alone.





THREE TIMES A NAUGHTY: (from left)
Kay Gee, Treach, and Vinny



PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREW SOUTHAM MARCH 16, 1999, CHelsea, NEW YORK CITY



TREACHEROUS

Wake up, sleepyheads: Naughty by Nature's Fury is much more than a blast from the past. By Matt Diehl

TRIO

Eighteenth Street, East Orange, N.J., a.k.a. "Illtown": the place where Naughty by Nature's chapter in rap 'n' roll history begins. Friday night is usually off the hizzy on this hard-knock block of clapboard houses, but tonight it's really on: Naughty is scheduled to perform at a tribute concert for legendary DJ Mr. Magic in Jamaica, Queens, and the whole neighborhood is planning to roll through. Supastars in PNB shirts and Pelle Pelle jackets gulp 40s bulging out of paper bags as a 16-car procession revs up. Brothers all around give each other a cross-fingered salute followed by a hissing whistle—the signal that indicates you're down with Illtown.

Still on the block: It's 10:50 p.m. Mr. Magic's event is supposed to start at 11:00, but Naughty's three-man threat is nowhere in sight. Yet there's a reason these boys from the 'hood are lagging a bit: Magic's shindig is the group's first live concert in the New York area in four years. It's also the outside world's first taste of their new dish, 19*NaughtyIX: Nature's Fury* (Arista).

11:09 p.m.: Vincent "Vin Rock" Brown, Naughty man *numero dos*, appears on the boulevard. Up the road, frontman Anthony "Treach" Criss and Sandra "Pepa" Denton of Salt-N-Pepa, his love partner of seven years and mother of his newborn daughter, exit a relative's home to high fives. Twenty-plus people pile into a 15-passenger van headed for the Q-borough. "We got the whole fucking village with us!" screams Vinnie. Kier "Kay Gee" Gist—Naughty's platinum-plated producer and DJ—trails in his white Montero 4x4.

It will for sure take more than a village to blast *Nature's Fury* onto the pop charts. True, the trio's 1996 Grammy-winning, platinum-selling

in the rap game; much has changed since *Paradise*. Tupac and B.I.G. have been shot to death. The South Coast is on the map strong. Public Enemy releases straight-to-the-Web albums. On the new track "Holiday," Vinnie maintains "we sell no rhyme before its time," yet these days fans seem to prefer Beaujolais Nouveau (rough-and-tough dawg DMX) to a respected vintage

(New Line) and 1994's *Jason's Lyric* (Gramercy), among other films. Televisionwise, he's flexed on the now syndicated *New York Undercover* and will appear in upcoming episodes of *OZ* (HBO). Treach is also set to star in the hip-hop-flavored indie film *Boricua's Bond* and *Book of Love*, a "dramedy" also starring Robin Givens and Richard Roundtree. "It's like a

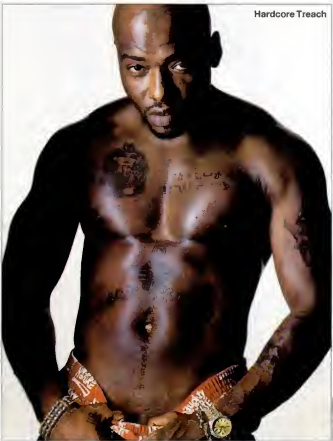
with Zhané and Next (whose 1997 hit, "Too Close," with its libidinous subject matter, is the direct hip-hop-soul descendant of "O.P.P.?).

Tonight, though, the group is hardly resting on its laurels. During the drive out to Queens, Vinnie turns local urban power station Hot 97 FM up loud, obsessively assessing the competition. "Is niggas gonna pick up Harlem World?" he queries the van's peanut gallery. "Ya like that Ja Rule record?" Some heads nod.

"Motherfuckers in the industry been telling us they don't know what our market value is," says Treach. Naughty recently switched labels, moving from legendary hip-hop independent Tommy Boy to mainstay Arista, home to heavy hitters Whitney Houston and Puff Daddy, and parent of L.A. Reid and Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds's LaFace. "We don't know what their market value is, because everything we done touched since we came out has turned platinum-plus." He's mad.

When Naughty reaches Queens' Club Paradise, Vinnie makes good on the loyalty he feels to his hometown crew. "You make sure everyone isn't having trouble getting in," Vinnie tells Johnny Ramos, one of the group's more imposing cronies. "If our people aren't here, we're *outta* here."

12:45 a.m.: Naughty's posse make their way through a dance floor packed with rap icons like EPMD's Parrish Smith, MC Shan, Kurtis Blow, and Whodini to the VIP area. Pepa remains casually elegant, downplaying her diva status as if to not take away from her boo's shine time. Treach and Vinnie disappear to work the crowd, while Kay Gee attempts to blend into the woodwork. "I'm always in the corner, analyzing," he says. But his recent



Hardcore Treach

PHOTOGRAPH BY [illegible]

"WE WERE STRAPPED," TREACH ADMITS. "WAS IT LEGAL? HELL NO. BROTHAS IS DYING. IS IT LEGAL FOR ME TO DIE? COPS SHOW UP AFTER EVERYTHING IS OVER, THEN CHALK YOU UP."

Poverty's Paradise made noise, and their 1993 swinger, 19*NaughtyIII*—with the anthemic, Kool-Aid-commercial single "Tip Hop Hoortay"—went platinum. Also true: Their self-titled 1991 debut—an American Music Award-winning platinum slab—exploded with the smash ass-on-the-bass mantra "O.P.P." But four years is like a lifetime

(smooth operator Big Daddy Kane). It's not like Naughty by Nature fell out of the game completely: Treach has a budding silver-screen career, which started in 1992 when Tupac dragged him to the set of Paramount Pictures' *Juice* (Treach scored a minor role as a gang member). Since then he's appeared in 1993's *Who's the Man?*

male version of *Waiting to Exhale*," he says. "I get my heart done dirty by a girl who's playing me out."

Recent years have seen Kay Gee rise to become one of hip-hop and R&B's premier studio avatars. Primarily responsible for Naughty's boutique labels, Illtown and Divine Mill, Kay Gee has also scored platinum smashes

production triumphs make him the group's biggest magnet in this star-searching crowd. Seven-year-old rapper Lil' Jus corners Kay Gee and implores him to produce a track ("How can I tell him no?" he says, laughing), minutes later, a hustler in a double-breasted suit stuffs a tape into Kay Gee's hand. "It's the hottest shit out there," the hopeful



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says. As Kay Gee walks away, he's smiling, though, saying, "You never know."

Naughty finally hit the stage at 2:19 a.m. The sheer populist force of their live show makes it seem like it's 1991. A master crowd motivator, Vinnie gets the crowd to chant the "O.P.P." chorus and wave their hands during "Hip Hop Hooray"—just like in the video; Treach stalks the stage with an intensity that suggests Lenny Lewis on speed and dazzles the audience with his patented rapid-fire flow. When Trecheroni takes off his shirt to reveal his tattooed chest, all the ladies in the place let out shrieks of ecstasy. Then Naughty goes on to perform their current single, "Dirt All by My Lonely"—the kids go berserk. "The classics they can jump to, but when it's brand-new," Treach says after ripping the mike to shreds, "they *feel* it."

Nature's Fury has the potential to satisfy old fans and new jacks alike. "This one is more up-tempo, more Tunnel-bangers," Kay Gee says during a post-show moment, referring to the sounds of the infamous New York City nightspot (see story on page 124). *Fury* also houses sunny all-night-long anthems like "Holiday" and "Jam-boree." Collaborations with contemporary hardcore heads such as Big Pun ("We Could Do It") and No Limit soldiers Master P, Silkkk the Shocker, and Mykital ("Live or Die") are hard to say no to. Naughty even get metallic with "Radio," a heavy romp that features up-and-coming rockers Rustie Overtones. "It's two rebellious cultures coming together," says Kay Gee, an admitted Korn and New Radicals fan. "We can feel each other's pain."

The album's most surprising devel-

Monica Lynch. Vinnie, in fact, confirms that Muslim activist Conrad Muhammad has approached him about running for a serious post in Newark. Despite being involved with grassroots politics and educational programs in East Orange—in addition to running Naughty's clothing company, Naughty Gear—Vinnie doesn't express any electoral aspirations. "I'm not into that right now," he says. "I'm interested in reestablishing my Naughty business."

Three days after they blazed the Magic gig: Naughty chill in Kay Gee's basement studio and discuss ways to improve their stage show. While located near his gritty East Orange roots, Kay Gee's sprawling home is the biggest house at the end of a long street where the houses get bigger and bigger. There's a pool out back, gold and platinum LPs on the walls, a picture of the troupe posing with Michael Jackson. It's all symbolic of the distance they've traveled since they began in the late '80s as the New Style, so named for the Beastie Boys song they built a routine around for a high school talent show. Naughty have, however, experienced their share of setbacks.

In 1994, Vinnie was arrested for what he calls a DWB ("driving while black") violation by the same squad, he claims, that shot to death Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo in the Bronx in February; in 1997 Treach was arrested on a weapons violation. "We were strapped like a motherfucker," Treach admits. "Was it legal? Hell no. Niggas is dying. Is it legal for me to die? Ain't nobody gonna stop nobody comin' to kill me. Cops show up after the shit is over, then

NAUGHTY BY NATURE:
Back in effect



PHOTO: NICKOLAS D'AMICO

MANY OF RAP'S CURRENT CHART-RULERS HAVE BUILT ON PAGES TORN FROM NAUGHTY'S MANUAL FOR SUCCESS.

opment, however, is Vinnie's improved flow, a real whammy coming from the Naughty member generally voted most likely to end up as the Andrew Ridgeley to Treach's George Michael. "I've just been evolving," says Vinnie. "When we first started, I was the beatbox, Treach was the MC, and Kay Gee was the DJ. The game started changing, and Treach told me, 'Vin, you got to start *rhymin'*.' People doubted me," he continues coolly, knowing that he just shocked a full house. "But when you sleep on someone, they'll catch you off guard."

"Vinnie could run for mayor and win," enthuses Tommy Boy head

chall you up. Fuck that."

Naughty's biggest setback, though, occurred when they tried to get out of their Tommy Boy contract—the negotiations of which account for most of the delay between *Poverty's Paradise* and *Nature's Fury*. Naughty and Tommy Boy had stormy relations; there's even a rumor that Treach released sewer rats and boa constrictors into Lynch's office over a financial disagreement ("It was more like garter snakes and baby mice," Lynch says, laughing).

But what precipitated the final break, according to Naughty, was money. "The game itself got expensive with big videos

and mad marketing budgets," Vinnie says. "Tommy Boy wasn't accustomed to that. We thought we'd try a major label and compete with what other artists out there are doing." Naughty says the split was amicable, except for Tommy Boy's decision to put out a greatest-hits package before *Nature's Fury* hit stores, instead of six months after the new album dropped. "Tommy Boy's trying to confuse the consumer," Kay Gee growls. "I don't think customers will confuse the two albums, but I'd rather not comment on that," Lynch says.

Despite setbacks, Naughty by Nature can take solace in the fact that

many of rap's current chart-rulers have built on pages torn from their manual for success. Puff Daddy's combination of nostalgic pop samples and thuggy street rhymes owes more than a little to "O.P.P." and its Jackson 5 sample. "With our past albums, people followed us because of what we did," says a confident Kay Gee. "That's what we're going to do again."

"This album feels like the first album," Treach adds. "Our thing is letting our fans know who the originators are. Naughty is straight trendsetters, man. We ain't nervous." Everything's gonna be all right. ☐



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WAYS OF LOOKING AT A WHITEBOY

From *The Slim Shady LP* to *The Chronic 2000*,

Eminem's

historic link with Dr. Dre has literally changed the face of hip hop—and rubbed a lot of old sore spots raw. Will he be the Elvis of rap? The Kurt Cobain? Will he serve as the messiah of true MCs or, as MC

Serch says, “corny-ass crackers”? It all depends on whom you ask. But whether you love him, loathe him, or just don’t give a fuck, all eyez are definitely on Eminem, hip hop’s latest and greatest supa MC (male Caucasian). *By Rob Kenner*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE SORREN FOR VIBE

1 "I try not to look at it that way—being white. I don't wake up every day and look in the mirror, 'Oh, I'm white.'"—Marshall "Eminem" Mathers III, as quoted in *The Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1999.

2 The whiteboy reclines in a deck chair beside the hotel pool wearing an itchy flannel shirt and generic baggy jeans. He looks like he hasn't showered yet. A colorful umbrella shades him from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Chances are you'd walk right past him—and the publicist chick with the purple eye shadow—especially if you were running late for your appointment with hip hop's Next Big Thing.

This is the guy who had Nas, RZA, Mase, and Wyclef fawning over him during MTV's super-duper "hip hop week"? This is the Detroit MC who slaughtered the "Phone Tap" beat during Sway & Tech's "Wake Up Show" on L.A.'s 92.3 FM and made Dr. Dre reach for his car phone? This is the lyrical terror known for his macabre sense of humor, off-kilter cadences, and complex interlocking rhyme schemes? Well, you'll be a monkey's uncle.

"We're working on *The Chronic 2*," the whiteboy announces off the bat. He seems remarkably unimpressed by the notion of collaborating with the creative genius responsible for the success of N.W.A and Death Row. Or of penning rhymes for rap superstars like Snoop Dogg, or of trying to top what very well might be the most important album—in any genre—of the past decade. "I just want to be involved, writing for it, helping," he says. "Dre's album is gonna be done a lot sooner than we thought it was. I'm dope than the first one. I kid you not. I'm working with this guy Royce, an MC who I brought from Detroit. Ever since we got involved with it, shit has been coming along real hot."

3 "People in Detroit still ain't really supporting Eminem like they should be," says Royce, Em's 5-foot-9-inch African-

American sparring partner, who recently signed a big fat deal of his own with Tommy Boy. "Everybody who was anybody on the Detroit hip hop scene knew he was the man, but when he goes on the stage in front of a bunch of people who don't know him, he's judged before he even rhymes. It's like, 'He's a whiteboy. Boooooo!" He's nicer than everybody, still, he feel like he gotta rock extra hard. Everybody's on his dick at the end, but he remembers how they acted. He don't even wanna claim Detroit—he only says 'Detroit' on his album, like, twice 'cause of the way he was treated there. Just for being a white MC."

4 "I was hoping to God his shit was gonna pop," says Kid Rock, the Motor City's primordial-blast-collar, whiteface rapper. "Cuz I felt he was one of the best MCs since Biggie."

Excuse me? "Just his wittiness...Em's witty like that in the way he forms his words. But he does it in his own way, staying true to his trailer-park roots." Rock's latest collection of pimp-funk, *Devil Without a Cause* (Atlantic, 1998), features a duet with Eminem called "Fuck Off."

"Have you ever seen him write a rhyme? He fucking murders the paper. This is how serious about hip hop he is. He writes so small, all over the paper. He never puts his rhymes all together. He has little rhymes all over, twisted, crooked, here, here. When he gets done writing on a piece of paper, the paper is shrunk. He goes, 'That's so nobody can ever steal my rhymes.' I was like, 'Dude, you're out of your fuckin' mind.' He's serious as cancer. I love him."

5 "I don't feel like my life is anybody's business." Back poolside, Eminem sounds angrier than he should be.

It's a glorious day, bright blue skies over Los Angeles, and he's sipping on Evian, compliments of Interscope Records. "I don't like to give the sob story: growing up in a single-parent home, never knew my father, my mother never worked, and when my friends came over I'd hide the welfare cheese. Yo, I failed ninth grade three times, but I don't think that was necessary 'cause I'm stupid. I didn't go to school. I couldn't deal." He says the song "Brain Damage"—on which a bully tells him, "You gonna die, honky," and beats him until he bleeds from his ears—is a true story. "Up until [the part where] my brain falls out of my head."

"I get offended when people come to me and ask me, 'So being a white rapper...' and 'Being that you're white...' and 'So growing up white...' and 'After being born white...' and white white white is all I ever seem to hear—instead of the music."

"When I was 9 years old, my uncle put me on to the *Bratnik* soundtrack. The first rap song I ever heard was Ice-T, 'Reckless.' From L.L. to the Fat Boys, and all that shit. I was fascinated. When L.L. first came out with *I'm Bad*, I wanted to do it, to rhyme. Standing in front of the mirror, I wanted to be like L.L."

According to the lyrics of "Brain Damage," though, the face staring back from young Marshall Mathers III's mirror would've been hard to confuse with that of James Todd Smith. "I wore spectacles / With taped frames and a freckled nose / A corny-looking white boy, scrawny and always ornery."

6 "Money's the fucking science," says MC Serch of 3rd Bass, one of rap's best-loved whites. "He really is. He's the original. He's crafty. He can hold his own with anybody. I think he really cares about the shit he kicks—for himself. I don't think he gives a fuck about anybody else. I think he genuinely rhymes into a mirror. 'Cause he's spitting for himself. He would be a dan-

gerous motherfucker in a battle, boy."

"My main concern with this record being this big is whether the door now opens up for the most corny, bullshit-ass crackers to come through the pipeline.... There's a lot of crackers that are making records that say, 'Yo, this ain't black music, it's just music.' *Eat a dick*. It's black music. We're now looking at a renaissance period for hip hop. It's becoming global, so everyone's making it. That's fine, but don't open your mouth telling me, 'This ain't black music.' 'Cause you gotta respect it. You can have respect for yourself and your culture, and still recognize."

"Only time will tell. It could go two ways: Either Em will make record companies realize that they need to support true MCs, or they will put more money behind white artists than black artists, and hip hop will become just like rock 'n' roll. That, to me, would be the equivalent of Revelation. You might as well just blow up the earth. It would be so disgustingly vile."

7 "A white MC should never try to be a black MC," Harry Allen, hip hop activist and media assassin, writes via e-mail.

"Which, when you think about it, would naturally eliminate a lot of the average white MC's content, beginning with the proclivity to 'rap.'"

Allen's hard-line is based upon an acute sense of racism pervading American society at all levels. "While racism (white supremacy) is often hard for many people to see, not to mention understand—even for nonwhite people who are the object of it—the phenomenon of *white rappers* can, very usefully, help people, especially nonwhite people, see and understand how white supremacy (racism) works."

"By observing the rewards that a white rapper of a given 'skill level' will receive (magazine covers and major articles, wide television exposure, large album sales, 'pop' airplay, powerful associations with 'top stars,' movie offers, modeling deals, etc.), versus what a nonwhite rapper of similar 'skills' might get (a video, some record reviews), it's very easy to convey the notion of benefits associated with

"I GET OFFENDED WHEN PEOPLE ASK, 'SO BEING A WHITE RAPPER...' AND 'BEING THAT YOU'RE WHITE...' AND 'SO GROWING UP WHITE...' AND 'AFTER BEING BORN WHITE...' AND WHITE WHITE WHITE WHITE IS ALL I EVER SEEM TO HEAR—INSTEAD OF THE MUSIC."

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MGD
after set.

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white supremacy.

"I'd say the key to Eminem's success is that Dr. Dre is producing a 'photogenic' white rapper for Interscope, which is signed with the largest record distributor in the universe. A distinct form of optimization is, thus, part of this equation. This comes as no surprise given the fact that hip hop culture is in a state of virtual surrender to the system of white supremacy. It has deemed that to be the subject of the refined practice of racism by white supremacists is the 'best' way to exist."

8 Perhaps whiteness is not what we (inaccurately) call a race, but rather, in the words of the New Abolitionists, a "historically constructed social formation consisting of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in society." The simplest example is the Irish, who were not always considered "white" in the social and economic sense of the word. Same for Poles, Slavs, Jews, and other less-than-Anglo immigrants. But if whiteness can be bestowed, as it has been to these other groups, it can also be withdrawn. Or refused. Or dismantled. This is a worthy goal. And one that has rarely been attempted.

When Eminem says, "I'm tired of being white trash / broke and always poor" on the brooding confessional "If I Had," the sentiment is simple. But on "Bad Meets Evil," Eminem's first collaboration with Royce, things get weird: "I don't speak / I float in the air wrapped in a sheet / I'm not a real person / I'm a ghost trapped in a beat." But the most puzzling rhyme is the one on which Eminem seems to vanish into vapor: "Some people only see that I'm white, ignoring skill / 'Cause I stand out like a green hat with an orange bill / But I'm not pissed / Y'all can't even see through the mist / How the fuck can I be white? / I don't even exist."

9 "I've seen Eminem sit Dr. Dre down in the studio," says Royce's manager, Kyno, "and make Dre look like a pupil. I mean, seriously. Dre will tell you, Eminem is more critical than he is. He's more of a perfectionist than anybody in our circle. A lot of the songs he's written for Dre, he will make Dre damn near go word by word and piece it all together. There's been times when Dre was like, 'Yo, let's just cut to the night.' Em'll tell Dre like, 'Yo, how the fuck you think you gonna get an album done like this?'"



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10

"Imagine the irony of white youth imitating a certain kind of Negro dress," wrote LeRoi Jones in 1963's *Blues People* (Quill/William Morrow). "Or even more ironic, the assumption by a great many young white Americans of many elements of a kind of Negro speech... Certainly a white man wearing a zoot suit or talking bop talk cannot enter into the mainstream of American society. More important, that white man does not desire to enter the mainstream because all he would have to do is change clothes and start 'talking night' and he would be easily reinstated." Jones (later known as the Black Power poet Amiri Baraka) admits only one exception to this analysis: "The poor white-boy in a really integrated neighborhood might pick up these elements of Negro culture simply as social graces within his immediate group."

11

At age 12, Eminem moved with his mom to Detroit, where they were the only palefaces in the neighborhood, except for a group of bikers. One night, Em brought Proof, a good friend and fellow MC who was then, and still is, black, home with him. *Why you bringing them niggers around here?* yelled a biker neighbor, or words to that effect, brandishing an AK-47. "What are you gonna do?" Em taunted. "Shoot me in front of my mother's house?" That's when the biker squeezed off a warning bullet, sending Proof and Eminem fleeing into the night.

Proof, who records for the independent Detroit label Hostile Takeover Records, says he's Em's "boy for life," although they fell out of touch before *Slim Shady* blew up. "Keep in mind, he's always lived in black neighborhoods. Even back then, I considered him a whiteboy who raps, rather than a whiteboy who's tryin' to be black. I remember he said *motherfucker* in a rhyme—just like that, [mother...fucker]. He didn't try to copy the slang."

"When I was going to Osborne High, on the east side of Detroit—Em was a dropout at the time—I snuck him in the school 'cause this guy wanted to battle me. I was like, 'I ain't gonna battle you, you can't even beat this whiteboy.' We did the whole *White Men Can't Jump* thing on him. Em whipped his ass and the whole lunchroom was laughing it."

12

[Ring] "Universal Records." Can I please speak with Wendy Washington in the publicity department? "One moment please..." [ring] "Publicity." Hi. I'm try-

ing to arrange an interview with Vanilla Ice. "Oh, this is the urban department. You want pop." [ring]

Ginger in the pop department listens to the request—will Vanilla Ice agree to be interviewed for a piece about Eminem? Her response would surely warm Slim Shady's heart: "What is the connection between these two?"

Vanilla Ice calls his new style of music "skate rock." His latest album, *Hard to Swallow*, was produced by Ross Robinson, who shaped the sound of whiteboy ensembles Korn and Limp Bizkit. (Eminem recently recorded a song with Limp Bizkit called "Our House.") This rock-rap fusion pioneered by Bad Brains and popularized by Rage Against the Machine is only the latest explosion of rap unwrapped, hip hop without the racial tension.

Many whiteboy MCs and DJs and B-boys know in their hearts that they would never *steal* hip hop because they love it too much. True hip hop, after all, is a color-blind arena, and they just want to be a part of it. Them and their friends. But somehow there comes a day when they all look up and there's no black people at their jams anymore.

As dope as Eminem may be, how can he avoid falling into the crosshairs of a global entertainment megamachine that senses they've struck a demographic jackpot? For here is an artist who can appeal to backpackers, skate rockers, and 'N Sync fans alike. Of course he can't, and still stay true to his intrinsic Slim Shadiness. Right?

So a call is placed to Miami, where Robert "Vanilla Ice" Van Winkle, the original corny whiteboy MC—whose blond dreads Eminem once promised to nip out—rides motorbikes and gets tattoos and makes a record when he feels like Ice asks if he can be honest. "I don't like to lie to anybody," he says. "Or beat around the bush. I don't really look at colors as far as rap goes. I just like to listen to music, and my honest opinion is...Eminem raps like a girl, man. I know he's all over MTV. Much success to him. I'm not a player hater or nothin' like that. I just don't like that little squeaky voice, you know? I'm not feeling it at all. He sounds like a little wimpy guy, you know?"

"His stuff's okay, but it's meaningless. The words are meaningless. Slim Shady? Who cares? What's a slim shady? Back in the day, I was totally embraced by the black audience. But then my record company crossed me over to the pop market. I became a record-label whore, but I was getting fucked paid. My album *To the Extreme* sold 15 million copies. When I outsold everybody that had invented the music form—and me being white—they kinda took it offensively. I really don't

DON CHEADLE CICELY TYSON MEKHI PHIFER



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A LESSON BEFORE DYING

BASED ON THE BEST-SELLING NOVEL BY ERNEST J. GAINES

HBO NYC PRESENTS A SPANKY PICTURES PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ELLEN M. KRASS PRODUCTIONS A JOSEPH SARGENT FILM DON CHEADLE CICELY TYSON MEKHI PHIFER "A LESSON BEFORE DYING"
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blame them, you know? It wasn't my fault the record sold so much. But I was a target, and a lot of people kind of turned their back on me.

"I don't have anything against hip hop. That's where I came from. I love hip hop. But honestly, it hasn't really grown too much. You got Puffy doing the same shit I did fuckin' nine years ago. It's like come on, get something new going."

13 Every lamppost on the block sports a HELLO! MY NAME IS SLIM SHADY poster. A sexy throng of club-clothes-clad rap fans stand outside in the cold midnight air, waiting to infiltrate the Sound Factory, an industrial-strength nightspot on the West Side of Manhattan. Tonight is Eminem's record-release party. Tomorrow he's off to Cancun for MTV's Spring Break coverage.

Inside, hip hop's whiteboy mafia is all up in the house. John "Shекky Green" Schechter, Em's co-manager and co-founder of Game Records, pours champagne for a bevy of babes known as the "Game Girls." Underground legend DJ Stretch Armstrong has just arrived after backing Em up at a quick Staten Island performance. "That shit was off the hinges," he enthuses. MC Serch slides

downstairs to give Em a preshow pound. A man who says he's Milkbone's manager—Milkbone being another Caucasoid rapper who receives a little white-on-white violence on the *Slim Shady* album—is distraught over not being admitted to the dressing room. His way is blocked by a grumpy, disheveled publicist, and his colleague, a towering black security guard who could barely fit through the door—if he did decide to open it.

A pair of 18-year-old females wearing extra-glossy lipstick hover nearby. Jill and Amanda have come in from New Jersey, hoping to initiate a Shady liaison. "I wanna meet him," says one of the bright-eyed WGs (or "white girls," as they're known to playas of all hues). "I wanna talk to him." *Do not block the door!* shouts the bouncer. *Either in or out, people!*

The doors swing open, and out springs Eminem. His hair is close-cropped and bleach-blond, just like in the video. His hoodie is *extra-extra* large. The silver chain attached to his newly fattened billfold glints in the colored lights. He and Royce jump to the stage and start into their underground hit, "Scary Movies." Their verbal gymnastics are flawless, though most of the crowd is unfamiliar with the song. That's when Em announces that he's gonna take it back for a minute. "This

is one of my...not *the*...but *one of my* favorite songs in hip hop."

Stretch Armstrong scratches into the instrumental as Royce and Em rock an oldie-but-goodie: Dr. Dre's 1993 "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thing." The thick-ass bass-bomb shocks the crowd awake all the way to the back of the room. A giant disco ball shoots silver spears in all directions as two loc'd-out Gs go crazy. "Put 'em up, put 'em up, put 'em up, come on, yo... *Sing that shit!*" Royce reinforces the punchlines as Eminem raps "One, two, three and to the four / Snoop Doggy Dogg and Dr. Dre is at the door..."

The pert pair of WGs press to the front of the stage, caught up in the rapture. By the time Slim gets to "My Name Is," even the sisters are singing along as he ponders "which Spice Girl I wanna impregnate."

When Stretch lifts the needle, Em drops his pants, exposing a pair of chicken legs and geometric-patterned boxer shorts. The girls in the front row appraise the goods carefully. "Can I be arrested now?" the starsays with a smirk. Then he steps off the stage.

"I love Eminem, but I don't love hip hop," Jill explains with a giggle. "He's so oooo-riginal. And so *cute*. You gotta go tell him. Tell him I wanna marry him." Amanda isn't so sure, but she joins her

friend in the postshow line outside Em's dressing room door. "He's cute," Amanda says, "but some of his lyrics are kinda fucked up."

"Oh my God," Jill interrupts. "I love every single song. Like, some people don't know how to rap and they have good beats, but he has both. He's so original and so cute." A girl just in front of them pulls down her tube top so Emily can sign her breast.

Shrugging off the song where Slim and his 2-year-old daughter dump his lady's corpse in the river, Jill pines away. "Oh no, he's just kidding. I love him. And I know once he sees me, we'll be together forever. He's perfect."

"He is cute," Amanda says, "for a white guy." **V**

Additional reporting by Peter Relic

State of DemEntia



"I don't know if it's so much musical," Rock continues, "or a blue-collar thing. I couldn't even tell ya. Maybe it's somethin' in the fuckin' water up here." Herewith, an informal rogue's gallery of Michigan meshuggeners. *Amy Linden*



IGGY POP: Poet laureate of punk rock and patron saint of acting badly. Raised in trailer park. As a Stooge, onstage in the '70s, smeared Skippy's on naked torso and rolled around in broken glass. Wanted to be your dog years before DMX was even born.



JACK KERVORKIAN: Not the doc you want to make house calls. Smiles less frequently than Patch Adams. Commits euthanasia on national television.



TED NUGENT: The official Motor City Madman. Ax-slinging, bow-hunting, heavy-metal guitar god now has career as right-wing-zealot radio shock jock. Once claimed to be a "bigger nigger than Russell Simmons."



CHARLTON HESTON: Former Moses and Homo-sapien visitor to the *Planet of the Apes*. Current president of the NRA and apologist for gun manufacturers. Let the (white) people bear arms or Charlton'll smite your sorry ass!

MARK FIDRYCH: Blond-afroed, flash-in-the-pan rookie of the year for the 1976 Detroit Tigers. Boasted a supersonic fastball, a wicked curve, and a penchant for talking to sports equipment.



ALICE COOPER: Golf-playing, blood-sucking horror rocker took on a chick's name and sold millions of records when Marilyn Manson was merely a gleam in his parents' eyes. And remember, back in the early '70s, wearing makeup and worshipping Satan was more than just a marketing scam. (Or at least it was a *more original* marketing scam.)



ED MCMAHON: Former Johnny Carson cohort, *Star Search* emcee, and Publishers' Clearing House shill. It's always been painfully obvious that this way-too-jolly Michiganite never had more than the slightest grasp on reality. "You are correct, sir!"



MICHAEL JACKSON: Not really white, not really from Michigan, but easily crazy enough to make our list.

INSANE CLOWN POSSE: Lucky rap duo made headlines in '96 when Disney-owned Hollywood Records recalled their album *The Great Milenko* for its violent, profane lyrics. ICP scores major points for getting into a brawl in a Greenfield, Ind., Waffle House and for the two-day bid member Violent J served at a Michigan mental institution for "panic attacks." This posse of clowns is totally insane!!





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Y'ALL WANT THIS PARTY STARTED, RIGHT?!?

MOST OF THE TIME, MUSIC

is two-dimensional. Like Michelangelo's masterpieces and Chris Tucker in 70 mm, the waves of sound that penetrate ears and bob heads have only a longitude and an amplitude—a length and a width. But there are rooms, special rooms, where music is played loudly, rooms where people are packed tight, decked out in their flyest gear. They dance and celebrate and surrender as speakers blast. It is within these rooms that music's *third* dimension, its sense of place, is conjured. On Sunday nights for the past six years, hip hop has had such a room. It's carved out of a renovated railroad terminal on the windswept corner of 12th Avenue and 27th Street on Manhattan's West Side. Welcome to the Tunnel.

The Tunnel is where Biggie, and then Puffy, and then the rest of the Bad Boy sound first reigned supreme. It's a friendly hometown laboratory for L.L. and Jay-Z, Foxy Brown and Mary J. Blige, Black Moon and Busta Rhymes. It's also where New York welcomes (usually with a complimentary bottle of Dom) hip hop's conquering heroes: Lauryn Hill, Jermaine Dupri, Snoop, Juvenile, 2 Live Crew, and Da Brat. Then there are the celebs: Mike Tyson, Denzel Washington, NBA and NFL players, and various hangers-on. And last—but most—there's the roiling sea of hip hop heads whose devotion and pilgrimage make the Tunnel a kinetic, living extension of hip hop's populist soul. As Busta puts it: "They don't bang nothing but hip hop at the Tunnel," he says. "If it's blazin' in there, it's the shit niggas want on the street. And as an artist, if you can make motherfuckers there jump and wild-out, then you know [your music] is on."

What Studio 54 was to disco Sundays at the Tunnel have been to rap: a legendary scene, and—with all due respect to points west and south—the epicenter of a culture. But for all the grand sweep of the Tunnel's relevance

in hip hop history, its story begins with a few core individuals: club owner Peter Gatten, original Sunday-night promoter Jessica Rosenblum, her then colleague Chris Lighty, and DJ Funkmaster Flex.

Gatten, 46, has been the reigning czar of New York's club scene for the past 16 years. Icy-smooth, silver-haired, and certifiably notorious, he has a permanently closed eye (courtesy of a teen-age hockey accident)

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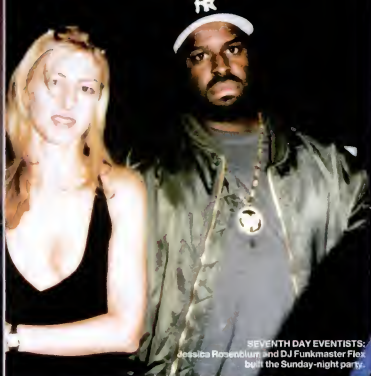
ZEV BOROW CHRONICLES
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GET READY TO SWEAT.

that is often veiled by a pair of dark sunglasses. He was raised in Ontario, Canada, where he opened his first club at age 19 with the insurance money from his eye injury. He made his way to New York, and in 1983, renovated an abandoned





CHECKPOINT:
Security's tight on
Saturday night



SEVENTH DAY EVENTS:
Jessica Rosenblum and DJ Funkmaster Flex
brought the Sunday-night party



THE INFAMOUS:
Tunnel owner
Peter Gatien chills
in the coed
bathroom.



**THEY KNOW WHY THE
CAGED GIRLS DANCE**
Party-goers on display

Episcopal church in the city's Chelsea neighborhood and turned it into a massive dance club called the Limelight.

In the early '90s, Gatien opened three new N.Y.C. venues. Each, like the Limelight, had space for more than 2,000 party-goers. The clubs made him millions. There was the Palladium in the Village and Club USA in Times Square. The Tunnel—an 80,000-square-foot, once-decrepit building—was the last to open. But the space had already been turned into a club and had already been named the Tunnel. Originally opened in 1987 by Rudolf Pieper, a German-born nightlife impresario, the club did have hip hop (mostly on Thursday nights). Although the hip hop scene at the Tunnel under Pieper is fondly remembered by many New York club-goers, it was overshadowed by other Manhattan spots like the Roxy and the Red Zone. That is, until 1992, when Gatien bought, renovated, and enlarged the club, then opened it for business. "I liked the space right away," Gatien says from his stately wood-paneled office in the Tunnel.

The club is little more than one huge dance floor. A rectangular 50-foot bar barely takes up a quarter of its giant main room. The DJ booth is attached to the front side of the bar, and there's a long hallway adjacent to the main floor, divided into several lounge areas. Then there is the notorious coed bathroom, which has its own full-service bar.

At first, the club's soundtrack under Gatien was techno and house—and the Tunnel still caters to that crowd on Fridays and Saturdays. But Gatien and company felt a revolution brewing. "We sensed early on that rap was about to blow up," he says.

Meanwhile, Funkmaster Flex was already working for Gatien, spinning old-school sets on Saturdays at the Palladium. Jessica Rosenblum was Flex's manager. A former doorwoman at New York's legendary '80s nightspot Nell's, Rosenblum was also an up-and-coming club and DJ promoter. She was raised in upstate New York, attended a posh Connecticut boarding school (where she broadcast a hip hop show on its radio station), and moved to Manhattan at age 17. She met Russell Simmons and other hip hop luminaries at Nell's and fell in love with the music. In the late '80s, Rosenblum began promoting Monday nights at another popular club, Odcon.

"I had the DJ play hip hop, and word got out. Run-D.M.C. showed up in matching Cadillac Seattles. Russell [Simmons] was always there," Rosenblum says, picking at a salad in a French restaurant nearer downtown apartment. She's a 33-year-old blonde who is high-pitched in voice, demeanor, and attitude. "[Rising record executive] Andre Harrell used to always try to get in," she says. "He was like, 'I'm gonna start my own label.' I was like, 'No,' 'cause he wore bad shoes.' Harrell eventually struck up a friendship with Rosenblum. "In '89, Andre asked me to put on a party for Heavy D [& the Boyz] in celebration of his *Big Tymz* (Uptown/MCA, 1989) album going platinum," she says. When she went to Harrell's office he introduced her to a new employee. "Andre said, 'This is my new intern, Puffy.'" Rosenblum says of the future king of Bad Boy, "Puffy was very humble and polite."

In 1991, Puffy convinced Rosenblum to help him start Daddy's House, a party at another Manhattan club called the Red Zone. In December of that year, Rosenblum was working with Puffy and Heavy D at a celebrity basketball game. The event, held at

Manhattan's City College, turned tragic when the crowd stormed the doors to get in—nine people were killed and 29 injured. Rosenblum is defensive about the incident. "I had absolutely nothing to do with organizing the event," she says. "Heavy and Puffy asked me to watch the cashiers because they said they couldn't agree on another person who they trusted." Rosenblum, unlike Puffy and Heavy D, was not named in any of the several ensuing lawsuits. (Puffy and Heavy were jointly found 50 percent responsible for the tragedy; the City University of New York system was found responsible for the other 50 percent.) Puffy declined to answer any questions for this article; a publicist for Heavy D says he has no comment on the City College incident.

Around this time, Puffy and Rosenblum's Red Zone party started drawing music-industry types and street heads, one of whom was a relatively unknown DJ from the Bronx who had only recently graduated from carrying the record crates of New York mix-DJ icon Red Alert. His name was Aston Taylor Jr., but he went by the tag Funkmaster Flex. Eventually,

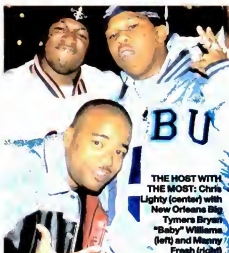


Rosenblum and Flex had lunch. She made him a promise: "I said, 'I'm going to make you the biggest hip hop DJ there is,'" Rosenblum says. "Of course, I had no idea what I was talking about."

Nevertheless, Flex was soon spinning at clubs all over the city. A few months later, Rosenblum was driving in Los Angeles and had an inspiration. "The name for a new party, a hip-hop-only party, hit me: Mecca. I thought, 'We'll do it on Sunday nights, and it'll be the hottest shit ever.'" Flex agreed to be the house DJ and the party opened at The Supper Club, a ballroom in midtown Manhattan, on Sunday, November 22, 1992.

By all accounts, Mecca clicked within a month of its debut. Until then, the hip-hop community had been relatively insular and the music hadn't blown up on the radio. The City College incident had cooled the party scene. Saturday nights at the Palladium drew a more mainstream crowd, and it had been years since the glory days of the seminal '80s clubs the Latin Quarter, the Rooftop, and the Roxy.

As Mecca's size and reputation grew, it bounced



THE MOST WITH THE MOST: Chris Lighty (center) with New Orleans Big Tynner Bryan "Baby" Williams (left) and Mase (right)

around several Manhattan locations. Finally, Gatten made an offer to Rosenblum and Flex: Bring Mecca to the Tunnel. The party opened there in

"IT WAS ESPECIALLY ABOUT THE RIGHT GIRLS. THEN YOU ADDED YOUR RAPPERS, YOUR INDUSTRY PEOPLE, YOUR BOHEMIANS, YOUR HUSTLERS, AND HAD THEM ALL MINGLE."



1993. "I didn't know if it was going to come off," says Flex, whose cherubic face belies his 31 years. "The Tunnel was such a big place, and on a Sunday night!" By this time, Rosenblum had hooked up with Chris Lighty, a Bronx native who also got his start carrying records for Red Alert. Lighty, now 30 and the head of Violator Records and Management, eventually went on to manage A Tribe Called Quest, Jungle Brothers, and De La Soul. (Today, he and his partner, Mona Scott, represent Busta, Missy Elliott, Mobb Deep, and Next, among others.) Lighty met Rosenblum at one of Puffy's parties. "At first, I was like, 'Who is this little white girl?'" says Lighty, rubbing his closely cropped head, seated in Violator's lower Manhattan offices. "But by the time we started promoting Mecca together I got used to it."

Lighty added street credibility to Rosenblum's manic energy. "Chris is smart," she says. "He knew, and could deal really well with, a whole other segment of people than I could." Lighty helped work the door and handled security. Things started slowly. "But by, like, the third week, it was rammed," Lighty says. "It was incredible," continues Rosenblum. "Everybody who was anybody came out, but it was bigger. Kids were driving up from Virginia. Kim Porter [Puff's current girlfriend] used to fly up from Atlanta."

The party was on. Cages that showcased writhing female dancers were hung from support columns on the dance floor. Flex would spin old school and classics until 1 a.m., then move on to newer, more underground tracks. "In the beginning," he says, "it was just about keeping people in there, dancing, no matter what. It wasn't easy 'cause it's a hard room to play—real long and thin." In 1992, Flex had gotten

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SALEM
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WHAT YOU
EXPECT

his own radio show on New York hip hop station **Hot 97, WQHT-FM**. "Until then, DJs were mostly breaking records on the radio and then taking them to the clubs. I was doing it the opposite way," he says. "I'd play a record on the air and say it was the New Tunnel banger. It was like, 'Two thousand people felt this last Sunday, so you should feel this. You're gonna feel this.'"

Ask Flex today about early Tunnel bangers and he mentions Craig Mack's 1994 platinum hit, "Flava in Ya Ear," Snoop's 1993 "Gin and Juice," and "all of the Black Moon joints." But nobody reaped the benefits of Tunnel exposure more than Puffy's Bad Boy



else," says Flex. Anecdotes abound: Mike Tyson, Denzel, and half of the Knicks' starting five on the dance floor (not with each other). Christmas with Biz Markie. New Year's with 2 Live Crew. A barefoot Puffy buying out the bar. Biggie holding court in the famous coed bathroom.

Ah, yes, the bathroom. As Lighty puts it: "That's where the real Sodom-and-Gomorrah-type shit goes down." A former security guard recalls: "I've caught people in the bathroom having oral sex. One time," he continues, "after a particular artist was on the mike, he proclaimed to the crowd that if any bitches wanted to hang with him and his entourage they'd

TUNNEL ANECDOTES ABOUND: MIKE TYSON, DENZEL, AND HALF OF THE KNICKS' STARTING FIVE ON THE DANCE FLOOR. CHRISTMAS WITH BIZ MARKIE. NEW YEAR'S WITH 2 LIVE CREW.

roster. "Nothing compared to Puffy, Lil' Kim, Mase, and, more than anybody, Biggie," says Flex. Puffy would bring all the latest Bad Boy remixes, and Flex would usually hit them off between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m. "That's when the roof comes off," he says, smiling.

But the Tunnel was equally about chemistry. "It was especially about the right girls," says Lighty. "The prettiest girls. About getting the downtown girls with the uptown guys, the SoHo vibe meeting the Harlem World vibe," he says. "Then you added your rappers, your industry people, your bohemians, your hustlers, and had them all mingle." The lines to get in—separate ones for men and women because everyone was frisked—formed hours before the club opened at 10:00 p.m. The police would close off the block to keep the street clear. Admission: up to \$75. Often, Lighty and Rosenberg would shut the doors at midnight, and then contend with latecomers offering \$200 to \$300 to get in.

Exactly how much money was being taken in is an open question. "We made money, but not nearly as much as people thought," says Rosenberg. She was twice robbed at gunpoint: once in her apartment after coming home from the club, and a second time in her car outside of her apartment.

But not everyone was contributing equally to the club's cash flow. Celebrities and industry luminaries began showing up in droves. They didn't pay to get in, but they did mix with the crowd. And the Tunnel never opened its VIP room on Sundays. "The stars were there in one big room with everyone

have to be fuckin' or suckin'." Thirty females came back and was doing their thing—and that's a modest estimate. Brothers do crush a lot at the Tunnel."

But sex isn't the only thing in the air. By all accounts, the mood-changer of choice on Sundays at the Tunnel was, and is, marijuana (and, as Flex puts it, "a whole lot of Cristal"). The hip-hop crowd is not a big hard-drug crowd," says Gaten. "[Sunday is] the night we throw out the least amount of people for drug use."

Other nights at the club, however, drew crowds that were more interested in cocaine and designer drugs, especially ecstasy. By early 1995, authorities had taken notice, and the club, on all nights, was regularly infiltrated by teams of undercover Drug Enforcement Agency and NYPD officers.

"The cops were watching us, and we knew it," says Lighty. "They knew all the hard drugs were going down on other nights, but it's not like they weren't going to watch the black night." Lighty says an undercover officer eventually approached him. "He was like, 'Why do you guys have bulletproof vests on?' I said, 'Well, motherfuckers out here got guns.'"

He said, 'Well, you're implying you've got guns too.' Shit, of course we did. This was the Tunnel, not kindergarten. I remember Tupac coming to the door and me having to be like, Pac, please, put your gun in the car."

Aside from the metal detectors and frisking, the club's Sunday-night security force—composed of up to 60 (as opposed to only 20 on Fridays and Saturdays) extremely large off-duty police officers, ex-military types, and part-time bodyguards—del-

GET THE DIGITS

Here are some actual factoids about Manhattan's legendary nightclub, **Harper's Index** style.
By Davis Hughes

1
The number of functional eyes Tunnel owner Peter Gaten has



1
The number of bar mitzvahs ever held at the Tunnel

1:1
The ratio of Alsaté to Hennessy needed to make the Tunnel's most popular drink, Thug's Passion

2
The number of single-sex bathrooms at the Tunnel



1
The number of coed bathrooms at the Tunnel



2
The number of lines to enter the Tunnel, one for each sex

2
The number of exits at the Tunnel, one public, one private

120
The estimated number of bottles of Moët polished off every Sunday night at the Tunnel



1,920
The approximate number of Camel cigarettes peddled per night at the Tunnel

7
The number of crates of records that Funkmaster Flex brings to the Tunnel every Sunday

48
The average number of hours required to clean the Tunnel after a weekend of operation



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JAM AUG. 11TH
SUNDAY
MECCA
SUNDAY
LIL' KIM
ANNIE ELE
TUNNEL

THE SHORT DOGS IN THE HOUSE SUNDAY AUGUST 18TH
TOO SHORT
LATINUM PARTY
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MECCA
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FUNKMASTER FLEX
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FLY PAPER: Mecca parties packed star power

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GREATEST HIP HOP CLUB
IN THE WHOLE WIDE
WORLD? MAYBE, BUT
NOWADAYS, PICK A
CONTINENT, PICK A
COUNTRY, PICK A CITY—
YOU'LL FIND FAR-FLUNG
HOT SPOTS HAVE A
FLAVOR ALL THEIR OWN.
BY CRISTINA VERAN

City: Mumbai (formerly known as **Bombay**), India
Club: 1900s @ The Taj Mahal Hotel
DJ: Akhtar

On the Sound System: Hip hop, techno, Indian pop
Favorite U.S. Artists: Puff Daddy, Pras, Run-D.M.C.
Crowd Scene: The rich-kids hangout—filled with “Bollywood” movie stars (Mumbai boasts one of the world’s largest film industries), Indian supermodels, and cricket players
Style: Cosmopolitan international and Indian fashion

City: Accra, Ghana
Club: Glenn’s
DJ: Maggy
On the Sound System: Hip hop, reggae
Favorite U.S. Artists: Tupac, DMX, Brandy
Crowd Scene: A minority of teenage girls, a majority of older men
Style: Baggy jeans, FUBU gear

City: Havana, Cuba
Club: La Pampa

DJ: Adalberto
On the Sound System: Hip hop, reggae, soul
Favorite U.S. Artists: Lost Boyz, Mo’Nique, Lauryn Hill
Crowd Scene: Packed to capacity with “La Gente de la Mo’la” (Cuban hip hop fanatics)
Style: Bootlegged American gear

City: Auckland, New Zealand
Club: The Bass
DJ: Dino & Adam
On the Sound System: New Zealand rap, East Coast U.S. rap, R&B
Favorite U.S. Artists: Anyone East Coast, Snoop Dogg
Crowd Scene: The cool, non-gangsta party crowd; Maori (Native New Zealand tribe), other Pacific Islanders, and whites
Style: Polynesian-inspired “tapa” cloth patterns in earth-tone prints, traditional Samoan “taulima” armband tattoos

City: London, England
Club: The Granaries
DJ: Doctor Commander B, Jiggs
On the Sound System: Hip hop, soul, reggae

Favorite U.S. Artists: Busta Rhymes, Mase, Lauryn Hill
Crowd Scene: Multicultural: Black, white, Indian
Style: Cosmopolitan couture: Versace, Dolce & Gabbana

City: Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Club: Sinners in Heaven
DJ: KnowHow
On the Sound System: Dutch hip hop, “golden era” (1980–1990) rap classics, R&B
Favorite U.S. Artists: Black Star, No Limit Soldiers
Crowd Scene: Dutch, Black, & Surinamese on a multicultural unity vibe
Style: Low-key, non-jiggy—Hijlfig & Replay

City: Suva, Fiji
Club: Traps
DJ: The Barlender
On the Sound System: Rap, R&B, reggae, Hindi hip hop
Favorite U.S. Artists: Tupac, Will Smith, Latifah
Crowd Scene: Fijian, Indian, Rotuman, other Pacific Islanders, & European—every-

one knows everyone
Style: Miniskirts and tight clothes for girls, baggy jeans for guys

City: Tokyo, Japan
Club: Harlem
DJ: Muro & Watarai
On the Sound System: 99 percent American hip hop
Favorite U.S. Artists: Lord Finesse, Premier
Crowd Scene: Lots of girls, B-boys in dance-floor circles, hardcore hip hoppers
Style: Writers Bench and Elements of Style gear

City: Timor, Guam
Club: Titi
DJ: Audio Delivery Crew
On the Sound System: Hip hop, Top 40, and “cha-cha” (local-style dance-pop)
Favorite U.S. Artists: DMX, Master P, Lord Tariq and Peter Gunz
Crowd Scene: Guamese, U.S. military, Korean and Japanese tourists, B-boys, and cha-cha dancers
Style: Relaxed-style jeans, Lugz, Dada T-shirts



opened other peace-keeping tactics. Trenton Stewart worked. Sunday-night security at the club from 1991 through 1998. “Inside, you have your typical street-corner dealers, gang members, and chain-smokers,” he says. “Maybe you catch someone with a razor. We knew certain faces and [wouldn’t] let them in. And we’d approach certain people early in the night and say, ‘Look, if anything goes down come to us first.’ We were judge and jury, and people respected us.”

Outside the club was another story. People would rush the door, bruised egos would turn explosive, and there was what many considered an overly aggressive police presence. Accounts of violence—most notably gunfire outside the club—are vague. The Tunnel doesn’t keep a log, reports to the police are few, and the authorities won’t speak in detail about their past or present activities regarding the Tunnel. Robert Cusick, a community-affairs officer for the NYPD’s 10th Precinct (in which the club is located), says only, “We continue to work with the Tunnel to provide a safe environment for all concerned.”

Gatien himself came under the police microscope, and in May of 1996, he and 23 others were indicted on drug conspiracy, racketeering, and distribution charges after a nearly two-year investigation by the DEA and the NYPD. Michael Aliq, an infamous Limelight and Tunnel party promoter—and admitted cocaine and ecstasy dealer—had already been convicted of murdering and dismembering Angel Melendez, another dealer and Limelight regular. Gatien’s indictment focused almost completely on the Limelight and, notably, not at all on the Tunnel’s Sunday-night party. (Rosenblum, Lighty, and Flex were questioned by authorities but nothing more.) Gatien’s bail was set at \$1 million.

And there were other problems. Rosenblum’s rela-

tionship with several of Gatien’s ‘op staffers, including his wife, Alessandra, had soured over personality conflicts. Tension had also developed between Flex and Rosenblum about money (Flex thought he should make more than his \$500-per-night paycheck) and over who deserved the most props for the success of the Sunday-night parties. Still, the two came together for one more Sunday during the Memorial Day weekend of 1996. “I know the money we made the club that night was the bail money that got Peter out of jail,” Rosenblum says. “I think he had cash but couldn’t show he had it; he needed to come from a night. [Gatien: “Absolutely not true.”] Over that summer, the indictments forced the Tunnel to shut its doors. When the club reopened nearly six months later, Gatien asked Flex, not Rosenblum, to be the new Sunday-night promoter.

“I felt like I’d started this thing that was great for hip hop and was making everyone good money,” says Rosenblum. “And then they go and get Flex to replace me.” She says she hasn’t spoken to Gatien or any members of his inner circle since. For his part, Flex says the decision to accept Gatien’s offer was not an easy one. “I felt loyalty to Jessica, but I wasn’t happy with my money situation,” he says. “But I came around to wanting to do it—for me, and because I felt the night was important for hip hop.”

Rosenblum eventually agreed. “Even though I was hurt I was still his manager, and I didn’t want another DJ in there,” she says. Today the two are friends, and Rosenblum continues to manage Flex on certain projects. “It was really just typical shit, the artist bitching about the manager and vice versa,” says Flex. “We’re cool now.” Lighty ended his affiliation with the club along with Rosenblum in what he says was a show of solidarity.

When Flex took the helm, he made changes. He

dropped the name “Mecca” (“out of respect for Jessica”) and brought in live performances. Soon, every big name in hip hop—including Jermaine Dupri, Da Brat, Jay-Z, the Fugees, Timbaland, Juvenile, Lauryn Hill, Too Short, Foxy, and Busta—was gracing a small moveable stage at the far end of the dance floor. Flex also reduced the official cover charge to \$20. “I wanted to bring more young people through and have them be able to afford to see the artists play live,” he says.

In February 1998, Gatien was acquitted of all charges after a trial that lasted a little more than four weeks. But this past January, he and his wife pleaded guilty to state-tax-evasion charges; at press time, he had been sentenced to serve 90 days in jail and five years probation (Alessandra got five years probation and 300 hours of community service). The couple will also pay close to \$2 million in back taxes and fines. Still, the Limelight recently reopened, and Gatien remains committed to the Tunnel’s hip hop party, now called “Funkmaster Flex Sundays.” “Nothing feels quite like Sundays,” he says.

Go to the club now and you’ll find a chorus of people who will tell you how much better it was back in the day, that post-Mecca Sundays have become “too ghetto.” But just as many rapshodize about the party’s current incarnation. What’s unequivocal, though, are recent, memorable nights. The Sunday after Biggie died. “I played ‘Hypnotize’ says Flex, “and there were, like, 2,000 people crying, totally silent. I was crying.”

Despite the Tunnel’s sometimes troubled history, it was—and still is—the seat of hip hop during a time when the culture changed the world. “I look at it kinda as if [the Tunnel] is an artist,” says Flex. “Say, like Biggie. Will there ever be another Biggie? No. Will there be artists who have the same kind of effect as Biggie? Maybe. That’s like the Tunnel. Will there be another club that has the same kind of effect? Maybe. Will there be another Tunnel?” He pauses. “No.” □

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11:00 P.M., ANY SUNDAY NIGHT

last winter: In full view of traffic along Manhattan's West Side Highway, more than 200 people wait in line for the Tunnel experience. On one side of the building, ladies perch stone-faced on stilettos and platforms, oblivious to the driving sleet. The array of light and dark skin, straight doobie hairdos and curls, glittery eyelids and lips, spandexed hips and tits huddled under umbrellas is enough to slow the late-model luxury cars in search of parking to an awed creep. But the honeys are all business: "They got TVs in there?" wonder two black girls about a white bubble Lexus with Delaware plates. (Yes, they've got *four* TVs.) And on the other side of the building, a raucous all-male line of mostly twentysomethings clamor to catch a glimpse of their willing prey climbing the stairs to the entrance. But the fellas will have to wait: At the Tunnel, it's ladies first.

Once you're in the door, the next stage of the night begins. "Step through the metal detector, take off your shoes, unzip your jacket, open your bags, hold out your arms, spit out your gum, open your mouth, and lift up your tongue." And while fly guys and girls in full-length minks grumble and suck their teeth as they get patted down, one look at a bowl of confiscated razors silences most gripes. The owners of contraband are quietly asked to leave, as is a disappointed female whose expectant tummy reveals that she came to party for two. But there are no status requirements or a dress code at the Tunnel. Twenty dollars later, you hand your ticket to a doorman and finally enter the belly of the beast.

12:00 a.m.: It may be 1 degree outside, but as the crowd peels off layers of leather and goose down, the scene unfolds like 1,000 hot-house flowers in full bloom. The revelers are primarily black and Latino, with a small but proud contingency of white kids rocking the same hairdos (finger waves, fades, Shirley Temple curls, and Caesars) as their black homies, plus a smattering of inquisitive Japanese hip hoppers. They come from New York's five boroughs, New Jersey, Connecticut, and beyond. Nine-to-fivers, young mothers, students,

party girls, and drug dealers all get pressed body-to-body, sharing the same air, which is thick with smoke (both weed and Newport), sweat, and designer perfume. The main room's decor is industrial heavy metal: exposed pipes and wires, stage lighting, massive speakers, and suspended disco-tech glitter balls.

All 3,200 of the Tunnel's cohabitants compete for attention: "It's all about me," they seem to say in unison. On the dark dance floor, colorful whirlpools of partiers jiggle and grind to the sounds of DJ Funkmaster Flex and his handpicked turntable squad, the Big Dawg Pitbulls. "All my independent ladies with real hair, let me hear you!" Flex commands. "All my niggas with the big dicks, where you at?"

Between swigs of Cristal, Flex transforms wax into electricity from his elevated booth. "To rock the Tunnel, you just can't play it like any other club," he says. "It's all about the 2,000-plus people in that room, who are some of the most aggressive, most hip people on the planet. They make the trend," he says. "They've seen artists like Jay-Z, Busta, DMX, and Biggie grow from being that nigger in the club with them to being on the stage to being on

IT'S SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE TUNNEL.
MINYA OH GETS IN LINE
WITH THE STARS, FANS, FREAKS,
SQUARES, TOURISTS, HUSTLERS,
SWINGERS, AND SECRETARIES. IT'S...
MIDNIGHT
IN THE GARDEN OF
GOOD AND EVIL







MTV and beyond. So you better come with something incredible at the Tunnel. If they like it, you're guaranteed a street hit, if not an all-out commercial hit. The Tunnel does not lie."

11:45 a.m.: Flex moves back into the mix. "Dreams of fuckin' an R&B bitch..." intones B.I.G., and the entire crowd sings along. A dozen camouflage-clad Brooklyn bad boys are like bulls in a glass shop, knocking aside everything in their path. On the other

to shoulder, in their Moschino jeans and sheer tanks, with glittery gel slathered on their shoulders. These tempresses have hard tattoos on their softest places, from Chinese tigers to huge rest-in-peaces. "You don't get nada... from us" they sing along to "Cheapskate" by the Sparty Thievs.

To preserve your sanity at the Tunnel, you've got to steel your nerves. Men, restrain yourselves from jumping at every drunk fool who shoves past you. Ladies, make yourselves numb to those hands coppin' rough handfuls of every ass and breast that scurries by. "No, he didn't!" Yes, he did. You feel sorry for that pretty light-skinned girl in the sparkly red tube dress with a red flower behind her ear, who's navigating the narrow "valley of death" that lines both sides of the Tunnel's centerpiece bar. Shorty's ample feminine fat is more than these guys can resist, as they hand her body off man-to-man like a sticky pinball. And in the fever pitch of a Tunnel banger like Puffy's "It's All About the Benjamins," the valley is notoriously the place where passing girls get tossed up in the air like confetti.

If you make it through the main-floor obstacle course, a short flight of stairs brings you into the Tunnel's notorious coed bathroom. Speakers pump "Pull It," by Cam'ron and DMX while thirsty boys and girls size each other up around a bar that stands right next to a row of slimy stalls. And inevitably, some of those stalls hold more than one body inside.

For ladies, all the power lies in the curves Mama gave them. For fellas, it's about the flash of cash.



TUNNEL OF LOVE: Sunday-night regular Kay gets royal treatment

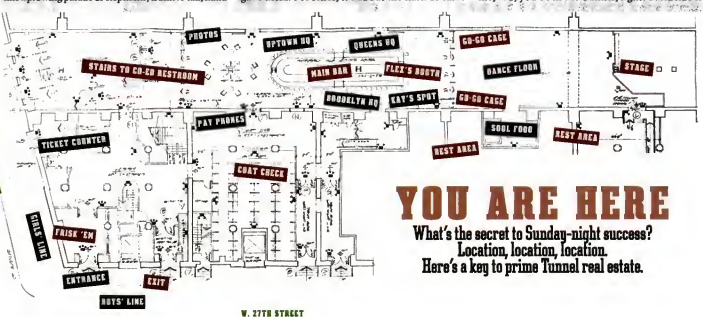
Young men actually seem overwhelmed by their fancy clothes—\$300 Coogi sweaters and Iceberg cartoon suits—as they pour some of the contents of \$85 bottles of Moët on the floor to show respect. A \$300 bottle of Cristal makes a most effective accessory. Hey, it's survival of the fittest at the Tunnel. One baby shark by the DJ booth nudges a Fendi-dipped female twice his weight and whips out a knot of papers to entice the gold digger in her. Then she realizes that it's a wad of food stamps he's flaunting. But she'll remember him, and that's all that counts. At the Tunnel, everybody can be a star.

"No matter where I go, people always come to me, 'Yo, you be in the Tunnel, right? I remember



EVERYBODY SAY, "GET MONEY": Tunnel partyers strike a pose

er side of the floor, a menacing group of Harlem sons, in blood red bandannas, Cardinals caps, and red Snoopy sweaters make their presence known. Smaller crews of girls navigate the club in the same way—like a plowing parade of elephants, trunk to tail, hand



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V.I.P. (VERY IMPORTANT PARTY) MEMORIES

Almost anyone who's ever set foot in a club has a story.

By Kenya N. Byrd and Shaheem Reid

"The Odyssey [in Los Angeles] was a freak show. I had new-wave hippies and wannabe rappers. My mind was blown. People were doing drugs and having sex. I was 17 or 18, on the sidelines watching. It wasn't about dancing, as I'd expected. I thought, 'This is too much for me. I'm an amateur. You people are the club Olympics.'" —Phil LaMarr, *MAD TV*

"I was at The Triangles in Miami. All of a sudden, some chick came up behind me and I turned around. She said, 'I see you around campus and I just wanted to introduce myself. My name is Dany.' I went back to my dorm room and called her. We stayed on the phone all night, and two years later we were married." —Dwayne Johnson, a.k.a. "The Rock," World Wrestling Federation champ

"Big Daddy Kane was at The Latin Quarter [in 1988]. He had this song about girls on their period. Biz [Markie] would beatbox, and when Kane got to the part about the girl's menstrual cycle he would throw a tampon in the crowd." —Teddy Tedd, member of the Awesome 2

"I was 15 or 16 and went to the Red Zone [in New York City]. You couldn't get in unless you were 21, but my partners hooked me up. I drank a couple of 40s. Women were coming up to me, but they didn't know I was young. There was a lot of love and a lot of girls." —Mekhi Phifer, actor

"In 1983, the Roxy in New York City was the Rolls-Royce of hip hop clubs: blacks, whites, Asians [united]. All kinds of professionals—doctors, lawyers—were hanging out there. Madonna and Mick Jagger would be up in there. Afrika B'laya and Afrika Bambaataa were usually spinning." —Chuck Chillout, DJ

"You need to ask muthafuckers who hung out with me, 'What's the wildest thing you saw Luke do in a club?' I had sex with a girl in Miami's Pink Pussy Cat Club about a year ago. I told her to come to the club with a skirt and no panties. Everybody was looking. I always wanted to do that." —Luther "Luke" Campbell, MC

"In 1977 at New York City's Audubon Ballroom, Grandmaster Flash coheadlined with Lovebug Starkey and Cool DJ A.J. It was the first time MCs did story rhymes in their regular verses, the call-and-response DJ [Kid Creole], and the echo chamber. Grandmaster Flash introduced break-spining. I ran home and told my mother every detail. I tried to conjure the same feeling she had about church because it was the same energy I had for Grandmaster Flash!" —Kool Moe Dee, MC



"When I did Annie [on Broadway], Studio 54 [in New York City] sent invites to the cast members. We were between the ages of 8 and 12. Some of us went once. I'm not sure why our parents allowed it. I always thought that was a little weird." —Sarah Jessica Parker, actor

"I remember when Prince used to own the Glensiam in downtown Los Angeles. This '94, Tupac got into it with King T because Pac had a red rag on his head and T snatched that muthafucker off. Back then, it wasn't no East Coast/West Coast feud; niggas from the West was more or less riding on each other. Everybody had posess of 25 to 30 niggas, so both of their cliques jumped in and then everybody walked off. Tupac was crazy than a muthafucker—I'm surprised he didn't whip King T's ass." —Snoop Dogg, rapper

"I was at The Fever [in the Bronx in the early '90s] using the phone, and the music stopped. I stuck my head out and I saw 500 people running towards me. I jumped on top of the phone [booth]. People were getting trampled. I saw this 5-foot Puerto Rican nigga running up with a Uzi. That was scary." —Big Pun, MC

"A friend and I went to Limestone [in Atlanta] about 10 years ago, and there were people talking around with dog chains, being led around with dog chains, and [wearing] spiked underwear—right among the suit-and-tie people. My friend said, 'I'm ready to go because these are some different kind of freaks. We old freaks, but these are different freaks.'" —Peabo Bryson, singer

"Two years ago, me and my cousin was pissy drunk in Philly's club Gotham. We got roiled on by eight bitches. We was on the ground, and I was like, 'Oh, shit! We're getting fucked up right now.' And we got kicked out. They didn't. We was pissed off!" —Charli Baltimore, rapper

"The year was '92 or '93 on a Sunday night at DVB in San Francisco, and we called our party The Jungle. We got acts like Cypress Hill, X Clan, Red Alert, Kris Kross, Nice & Smooth, and Jermaine Dupri. That night was the perfect vibe. B-boys were breaking, and the phattest groups performed for free, out of love for hip hop. I haven't experienced that vibe ever again." —Sway [with King Tech on backup], DJ

From top to bottom:
Phil LaMarr, Sarah Jessica Parker,
Mekhi Phifer, Charli Baltimore,
Luther Campbell



you," says Chekasa, Kay for short. On any given Sunday, you'll find the 24-year-old Bed-Stuy native posted up against the wall near the DJ booth, on the

"Brooklyn side" of the bar. With her wavy black hair, flawless caramel complexion, and infectious smile, it's no wonder that when guys overlook Kay at her waist-high perch or trip over her wheelchair, they often apologize by kissing her hand and then asking for her number. Kay's chair has been tipped over and even thrown up in the air, but she says, "I never feel scared. This is my spot, I know what to expect."

The way the Tunnel crowns its royalty is by blurring the line between the regular people and the stars. In the past, the Tunnel's ghetto celebs have shared their space with everyone from regulars like Busta Rhymes and Allen Iverson to surprise visitors like the late Eazy-E and actor John Leguizamo.

ONE BABY SHARK BY THE DJ BOOTH NUDGES A FENDI-DIPPED FEMALE AND WHIPS OUT A KNOT OF PAPERS TO ENTICE THE GOLD DIGGER IN HER. THEN SHE REALIZES HE'S FLAUNTING A WAD OF FOOD STAMPS. BUT SHE'LL REMEMBER HIM, AND THAT'S ALL THAT COUNTS.

Legend even has it that when she's in New York, Janet Jackson dons a disguise and hits the Tunnel to stay in touch with the streets.

You can also get the star treatment with the valet parking outside, a soul-food catering service in the back, and a coatcheck near the front door. In the corner of the main room, there's a photo area where Cisco, the photographer, takes \$5 snapshots of two very pleased ballers who are posing suggestively with their new acquaintances, a pair of thick, feather-clad vixens, in front of an airbrushed Mercedes. And then there are alleged services. One Tunnel-goer claims that for a discreet \$20, an insider offers to store your coat up in the DJ booth. Other regulars claim that a hefty tip can get you past the line outside and even the intense security check. "I've seen niggas who even paid to bring guns in the Tunnel," says one regular.

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LORDS OF THE DANCE FLOOR

Great club DJs sit only as high as the songs they spin. *By Noah Callahan-Bever*

DJ KOOL HERC

The father of hip hop

"My B-boy jam was always James Brown's 1967 'Give It Up or Turn It A Loose,' 'cause it was the perfect up-tempo. And of course, my slow joint was the Delfonics' 'I Gave It to You,' [1970]. I would always close with Gladys Knight's 1968 'Time to Go Now,' for obvious reasons."

DJ RED ALERT

WQHT-Hot 97 and club DJ, N.Y.C.

"I'm best known for my mix of Biggie's 'One More Chance/One More Chance (remix),' [1995]. People know that I'm the DJ whenever they hear that particular mix. Right now, my final song is Chico DeBarge's 'No Guarantees,' [1997]. It cools people out."

DJ KID CAPRI

Mix-tape king

"To close on the Puff Daddy and the Family tour I used Jay-Z's 'Hard Knock Life,' [1998], 'cause I hooked Jay up with [Mark] the 45 King. Nowadays, I like to promote my album, [Soundtrack to the Streets, 1998], at the end of the night."

DJ STRETCH ARMSTRONG

WQHT-Hot 97 DJ, N.Y.C.

"I always play 'Ain't No Fun' by Snoop Doggy Dogg and Tha Dogg Pound, [1993]. It works every time."

DJ LONNIE B

WSOJ 100.3 and club DJ, Richmond, Va.

"Anything by Master P makes people go crazy. That's it. You can't DJ a party down here without doing a No Limit set. A lot of times I close with Rell's 'Love for Free (featuring Jay-Z),' [1998]. It keeps them from getting too rowdy at the end of the night."

DJ JESSE DE LA PEÑA

Club DJ, Chicago

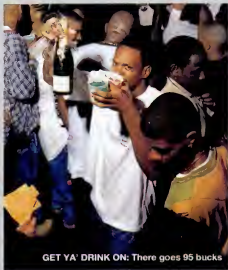
"I'm starting to play 'Get Involved' by Raphael Saadiq and Q-Tip, [1999], because it's unique and people are feeling it. 'Quiet Storm' by Mobh Deep, [1999], also works. I usually close with 'I Miss You' by Björk, [1995], the down-tempo remix. I kinda broke that song in Chicago. It's cool for hip hop kids to be dancing to Björk."

DJ BABU

Beat Junkies/Dilated Peoples, Los Angeles

"I usually play 'Ego Trippin' by the Ultramagnetic MC's, [1987], because the beat is dope and it's from that golden era of hip hop. It will *always* be a DJ favorite. [The song I close on] always depends on the crowd, but sometimes I throw on Akinyele's

"Put It in Your Mouth," [1996], 'cause people are about to leave the club and go do their thing. That song gives them a little inspiration."



GET YA' DRINK ON: There goes 95 bucks

"But that was back in the days. Nowadays, they hide razors in the soles of their boots. But those metal detectors aren't even on anyway." All of the above is strictly prohibited by Flex and the club's management, and the club's head of security says the detectors are operating. The Tunnel has the most aggressive search procedure this side of Riker's Island. But when the close quarters, rowdy sounds, overactive egos, and Alizé take effect, fights are bound to break out.

At one point, the dance floor seems consumed by a virus of brawls. Flex turns the lights on the crowd. "Okay, I've had it!" he rails. "If anyone grabs a female's ass, security will fuck him up. If you start a fight! Security will fuck you up." Clad in black hoodies and bursting black T-shirts, the Tunnel's multicultural security force, with their buzzing walkie-talkies and body armor, are far scarier than the club's thugs. When one ruffneck ignores Flex's warning, he is escorted—no, more like dribbled—out the door.



3:10 a.m.: Flex throws on the operatic intro to Nas's "Hate Me Now." The hammering beat rushes in, and the entire Tunnel erupts into frenzied leaps, partiers swing from the rafters and exposed pipes, painted birds bounce atop muscled shoulders, and champagne showers the crowd. Flex turns to an awe-struck record exec and screams, "I ain't never gonna stop fuckin' with the Tunnel! This is me!" The capacity crowd seems to scream in agreement.

4:30 a.m.: Trickling out into the still-frigid air—ears ringing, sweat settling—many folks are wobbling home only to change clothes for the Monday workday. As they make their way to cars and cabs, colorful posters and flyers (at the exit, along the highway, everywhere) alert tonight's Tunnel survivors of next Sunday's party. And you can barely wait those six short days until you can come back for more. □

Additional reporting by Andrew Collins, Josh Leck, Yvonne Lefebvre, and Scott Woods

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THE FORMULA
Eightball (left)
and MJG



PHOTOGRAPHED BY JON GIPE FEBRUARY 24, 1999 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

YOUNG & RUBICAM

PERMS, SCIENCE FICTION, AND HIP HOP

EIGHTBALL AND MJG'S BIBLE-BELT RAPS ARE A CONSCIOUS THUG'S PRAYER

I don't let just anybody work on my hair," says Marlon "MJG" Goodwin. He's 50 percent of the Memphis-reared rap evangelists Eightball and MJG, and he's sitting through a Saturday afternoon braid job in Houston's Magical Hands Salon. His tweezer-like fingers pick through the bountiful catfish-and-hush puppies platter on his lap. The shop's co-owners, Terry Gabriel and Katie Mitchell, are two of the three people in Houston he lets touch his head. Glenn Stonum, currently digging deep into MJG's scalp, is the third.

"There are some things you should never change," says MJG, whose deliberately laconic flow suggests a personal motor permanently set on cruise. "You don't change mechanics, doctors, or beauticians ('Man, I'm gonna mess your head up if you don't hold still,' Stonum interjects). If you go to a strange doctor, they might give you something that will shrink your shit up." MJG half smiles and takes another bite of fish. He's still holding the sandwich through a short post-need-to-dash through traffic to his crib. The hulking engine of his black 1996 Impala loudly purrs as he blasts some of his not-yet-released sonic chronic.

Once inside his two-story fortress—and after a blintz to chase away that last bit of yum-yum—MJG's ready to converse again. His focus has shifted from hair to his newborn—*In Our Lifetime* (Suave House/Universal), the long-awaited reunion of him and longtime partner Premo "Eightball" Smith. "You have *In Our Lifetime* from two niggas," says Eightball weeks later, over the phone, of the LP's title, which may remind some of Jay-Z's 1997 multiplatinum spinner *In My Lifetime, Vol. 1* (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam). "Then there's *In My Lifetime* from one nigga. The only people that should have a problem with it is them motherfuckers hatin', tryin' to start some shit." Then again, there's jazz cat Dave Douglas's *In Our Lifetime* (1995), Marvin Gaye's *In Our Lifetime* (1981), and

Neil Diamond's *In My Lifetime* (1996). History truly repeats itself.

"We felt it was best not to change [our sound] too much," says MJG of *Lifetime*. "You can make mistakes if you jump out there too fast. I'm not about to be the one who goes out there and has [other artists] come behind me, like, 'Oh, we see how you fucked up, let us learn from you.'"

Microphone fiends fear not: The fellas haven't taken a step backward. If anything, the album is an even more refined take on their distinct, space-age-pimp style; the first single, "Don't Flex," features a sci-fi funk hook courtesy of Organized Noise's Mr. DJ. And the tune's swaggering, strip-joint lyrics ("I wanna see you touch your toes in that dress, baby / Bounce up and down like we're havin' sex, baby") prove that the duo are just as 'hood raw as ever.

You can't blame Ball and G for not wanting to change too much. Together, and apart, they've sold more than a couple of trunkloads of records (which has led Suave House to major-label partnerships). *Coming Out Hard* (1993) and 1994's *On the Outside Looking In* (both on indie Suave) made Eightball and MJG big dawgs in the vast kennel of post-Geto Boys southern harshcore. Those two discs combined moved more than a half million units, and 1995's *On Top of the World* (Suave House/Relativity) went gold. Then there are the solo works: MJG's live-instrument-powered *No More Glory* (Suave House/Universal, 1997) rode to gold status on the back of the hit single "That Girl" and a hot-to-trot video that featured *Cherish* star Stacey Dash. Eightball's double-platinum triple disc, *Lost* (Suave House/Universal, 1998), was a stellar feast of thick beats and high-profile guest stars—such as Busta Rhymes, Master P, and Goodie Mob.

Ball and G's narrative-style hip hop booms out of a post-Civil Rights black South. Busing, crack, preachers, and, just as in the past, horrific hate crimes. For example,

MJG says the image of the burning Confederate flag on his solo LP's cover was specifically directed at all the "racist bullshit that happens down here. Like in Jasper, [Tex.]—dragging [James Byrd] to death. The title, *No More Glory*, was about that—there'll be no more glory for people who are still living in the past, doing that kind of shit."

I think niggas from the South can feel more like themselves," says Eightball, halfway through a game of pool at the Suave House studios. In the spirit of keeping things "country," Suave House Records CEO/grand pooh-bah Tony Dupree—who discovered the pair at a music showcase at Memphis's 380 Club in 1991—relocated from Memphis to Houston back in 1992, leaving New York and Los Angeles to the old-money school. "They don't have to talk or act proper. Back when we first started, wasn't nobody coming out on stage with no perms or curls. None of that country shit was cool back then." In Eightball's mind, being "country" means being true to self, determined, fearless, uninhibited.

"When somebody does something crazy or offbeat, you might say, 'Man, you country,'" continues Eightball, who recently embarked on a hospital "vacation" because of a collapsed lung. (This, of course, delayed the completion of *In Our Lifetime*. He wouldn't comment on the situation.) "There are country niggas from New York, country niggas from all over." These buck-wild, free-spirited consumers are the people Ball and G are counting on to support their crusade into the next millennium. As Ball turns back to his pool game, you can imagine that, deep inside his massive 300-something-pound frame, there's a little country-ass nigga laughing his ass off.

Yep, Eightball is a rather large gentleman. As he sits down to a Sunday soul-food lunch of chicken, greens, and a double serving of Pepsi, his colossal frame conjures up twenty

BY TONY GREEN

gridiron visions of grandeur. Someone on a plane once took him for Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive tackle Warren Sapp; the fool followed him all the way off the access ramp.

"I played a little football when I was a kid," Ball says. "Every day when I came home from school, we used to play on a big-ass yard. It would be the little niggas against the big niggas. We always had the spectacular plays, but the big niggas would catch up to us and bust our ass." For a long while, southern rap was like the "little niggas"—kinda fresh every once in a while, but not on par with the boys on the West and Northeast coasts. "Now," says Ball, "that little nigga done got big."



Bruh, can you spare a dime? Eightball don't rhyme for free.

Eightball and MJG first hooked up while doing a bid in Memphis's Melrose High School marching band (both plays played the trumpet). They caught the rap bug from a friend of Ball's who'd spent a lot of time in New York: "He'd visit his mama and come back with a bunch of mix tapes and stuff he got off the radio," Eightball says. Folks like L.L., Whodini, and Run-D.M.C. were the voices that inspired Eightball and MJG to want to become MCs when they grew up. Look at them now: big ballers with fat careers.

"Over time we've made a pretty good mark," says MJG of the duo's run. "We never had any No. 1 singles or anything that stayed No. 1 for weeks and weeks, but we're still recognized for what we've done. When it comes to southern rap, I think we've got a piece in the puzzle." This puzzle has a rich, spirited history inside.

Outside of New Orleans, Nashville, and the Mississippi Delta, no place in the South has Memphis's musical pedigree. You can go all the way back to the city's long-standing gospel tradition—with more churches per capita than any city in America—through B.B. King's urban blues, all the way up through the southern soul heyday of Stax and Hi Records. Suave's chief producer, Instant "T-Mix" Jones, is also from Memphis, which explains the lush keyboard chords, creamy bass lines, and soulful vocal washes that are the label's hallmark.

"See, most of the time, people are influenced by their mom's music," says Jones, who honed his chops playing keyboards for an old-school "copy band" called Mirage. "Pop was more into hustling. And she was missing him when he left. That's why the music mom was playing was all that smooth soul music, songs that were about being in love and missing somebody."

In a way, it's all the blues, which you can't really understand unless you first understand a few other things. The blues' heirs in the '60s and '70s were Bobby "Blue" Bland, Little Milton, and Z.Z. Hill, and the music's continued popularity in the black South has filtered down to people like Ball and MJG, who grew up in female-headed, B.B. King and Al Green-filled households. There's no mystery—blues people survive. That's why hip hop reigns supreme these days. Eightball, MJG, and the dirty South will continue to rise, lead, and shine—burning crosses and tom bodies aside. ■

FATBOY SLIMBOY

VIBE gives props to this century's most dynamic big man/skinny man duos



Jefferson Davis "Boss" Hogg (Sorrell Boone) and Rosco P. Coltrane (James Best) (*The Dukes of Hazzard*, CBS, 1979–1985)

These two are the original down-south hustlers. Hogg with his cigar and sideburns, lovereer rockin' the all-white three-piece suit and that matching Cadillac to boot. On the flip side, the Boss's slimmer, squad-car-drivin' cappo, Rosco P. Coltrane, handled his biz for real. From extortion to blackmail to pulling out stainless-steel gats, MC Rosco P. did his thing when it was time to lock Hazzard County down. They were peeps through thick and thin, through high-speed car chase after high-speed car chase. They had Bo (John Schneider) and Luke Duke (Tom Wopat) shook for sure. What? What?



Freddie "Rerun" Stubbs (Fred Berry) and Roger "Ra" Thomas (Ernest Thomas) (*What's Happening!!*, ABC, 1976–1979)

Rerun was the hip-hop-representing, pop-locking overweight lover, while his childhood friend Raj was the rail-thin, cool-ass nerd with the high-pitched laugh and dope-ass lense-less Cazal frames. Odd couple or not, we loved watching these two girls, scheme on their parents, and play the dozens with soda-shop operator Shirley (Shirley Hemphill) and Raj's bugged-out little sister, Dee (Danielle Spencer). And don't forget Dwayne (Haywood Nelson Jr.): Hey hey hey!



Joliet Jake (John Belushi) and Elwood (Dan Aykroyd) (*The Blues Brothers*, Universal, 1980)

Let's be real here: Eminem and Jon B should really get on their knees and thank husky man Jake and his gaunt brother, Elwood, for they made it possible for white guys to receive honorary ghetto passes. These brothers hung out with Cab Calloway, danced with James Brown, ducked five-o-like champs, and were one of the first to wear loc'd-out shades. Besides, you've gotta show love to the two thugs who were badass enough to look cool while whipping around in a busted, second-hand police car. Sunglasses couldn't fade their blue-eyed soul. I-right?



The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) and Puff Daddy (Sean Combs)

These hip hop superheroes were the ultimate dynamic duo. The everlasting Biggie was the invincible MC whose lyrics hypnotized throngs of listeners. B.I.G.'s hyperkinetic energies enabled him to launch his spirit from underground mix tapes to the top of the *Billboard* charts in a single bound. Meanwhile, his partner, Puffy, has the power of clone: He can pop up on MTV, BET, and your favorite radio station simultaneously, all the while riding hard for the B.I.G. man via his constant musical tributes. When B.I.G. rhymed "Poppa and Puff / Close like Starsky and Hutch" (on 1997's "Hypnotize"), he wasn't kidding. It's all good, bay-be bay-bay! *Shaheem Reid*



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARNALDO ARAYA-LUCENA
STYLING BY KADI ACHEROS



KOLANI ROO, 22,
LIVES FOR A TRIBE
CALLED QUEST.
"HIP HOP IS HIP,
AND THAT'S
WHAT SURFING
IS ABOUT," HE
SAYS. "WE
GET DOWN!"

This page: Neon green and white nylon floral-print board shorts by NSU.
Face & Body: Sunblock by Coppertone in SPF 30;
hair color by L'OREAL Féria for Men in Cherry Cola

Previous page, from left: White cotton tank top and blue nylon board shorts, both by NSU; sneakers by Vans; backpack by Oakley; surfboard by Pat Rawson; sunglasses by Oakley; black cotton basic crewneck T-shirt by Calvin Klein Underwear; blue nylon shorts by Volcom; boots by Timberland; sunglasses by Jen; backpack by Onell; board by Kanadu; nylon tank top by Kona Waena Wilkaka; navy corduroy cargo shorts by Hurley; sneakers by DC; board by John Carpenter; straw hat by Le Hat; backpack by Hurley; white cotton T-shirt, gray and black nylon shorts, white bucket hat, and backpack, all by Ezekiel; sneakers by Reef; watch by Swatch; glasses by Smith; board by Cordell

WILLINGER, NASE,
"SURFING IS AN ART
EXPRESSION," SAYS
RANKED SURFER IN THE
AND A TRIP HAVE A HIP HOP SONG IN MY
FOOD SURFING."

Long-sleeved Jamaica Spirit Group
canopy shirt by GUESS; blue
and red hooded shorts by Hanes;
white bucket hat by GAP; surf-
board by John Carroll; shoes
made by Charles & Ray; sunglasses
made by Oakley; watch by SP-12

NO OPEN
FIRES

CONVINCED
BECAUSE "HE STOKED THE
WAY YOU FLOW IN SURFING."
FLOWS," SAYS THE TOP-10 WAVE RIDE
LISTEN AND INCORPORATE IT INTO MY TURP

Orange nylon board shorts by Ezekiel.
Face & Body Oil-free sun-care spray by Clarins in SPF 15; revitalizing
treatment for dry hair by Phytotherapie







"SURFING IS ONE OF THE ONLY WAYS TO DEFY GRAVITY. IT BECOMES MORE LIKE ACTION IN ACTION," SAYS HAGEN. "WE DON'T EVER THINK ABOUT IT. IF THERE'S A WAVE, WE JUST SURF IT."

Burgundy Hawaii Five-O woven cotton and rayon three-quarter-sleeve shirt and hat, both by PNB Nation; black and white nylon floral shorts by Quiksilver; white cotton tank top by Fruit of the Loom; black nylon board shorts by Ezekiel; watch by Swatch; cream, green, and blue floral cotton and rayon button-down shirt by Club; blue corduroy shorts by Hurley; navy nylon board shorts with baby blue and white floral border by NSU; blue and yellow towel by Nautica. SEE THE DETAILS



V STYLE

CRIMINAL- MINDED

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A FELON TO PLAY ONE. BUT IT HELPS TO HAVE A MISCHIEVOUS PAST. **VIBE ASKS THE HOT ACTORS OF *OZ*, HBO'S SLAMMIN' PRISON SERIES, TO OWN UP TO THEIR CLOSETED MISDEEDS.** *BY ROCHELL THOMAS.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARC BAPTISTE. STYLING BY KADI AGÜEROS



THE LINEUP FROM LEFT:

THE CORRUPTER

"Be careful who you trust," says Dean Winters, a.k.a. Fleck O'Flint, the second OZ's Emerald City cell block. During the series's first season, O'Flint slowly (and slyly) killed an enemy by lacing his dinners with finely minced glass. Winters has never been on lockdown. But, he confesses, he did get deported once. "My brother and I got into a bar fight on the island of Crete," he explains. "We got escorted to the airport and told to leave."

THE RENAISSANCE MAN

Name any role and Adekunle Akininloye—Agbaje's probably done it. The Nigerian-born, London-raised tight-body has been a postman, an aerobics instructor, a bricklayer, a model, and the manager of a sheepskin-coat store. Oh, and Akininloye-Agbaje (Simon Adebisi on OZ) also has a law degree. "So it's kind of ironic that I'm playing a criminal," he says.

THE RUNNING MAN

Ask Kirk Acevedo about the time he was handcuffed. The Bronx native, known to OZ fans as Miguel Alvarez, will spin a Hollywood-worthy yarn about a teenager who hops over a subway turnstile—trying to save a buck—and ends up face-down on the concrete with a gun to his dome. "I jump over the turnstile, and the bum—err homeless guy—goes, 'Hey! Come down here!'" says Acevedo, 27. "Every day he's been there I'd put money in his cup, and he's a cop! A cop!"

THE KID

J.D. Williams, 20, is 10 years younger, 50 pounds lighter, and a foot shorter than his felon cast mates. But what the "nice guy" behind OZ's teen convict, Kenny, lacks in life experience, he makes up for in spirit and talent. "I was, like, the only kid in the audition who threw himself up against the wall," Williams says. "After, I was only two blocks from the audition spot and my pager went off...I got the part."

NEW MAN ON THE BLOCK

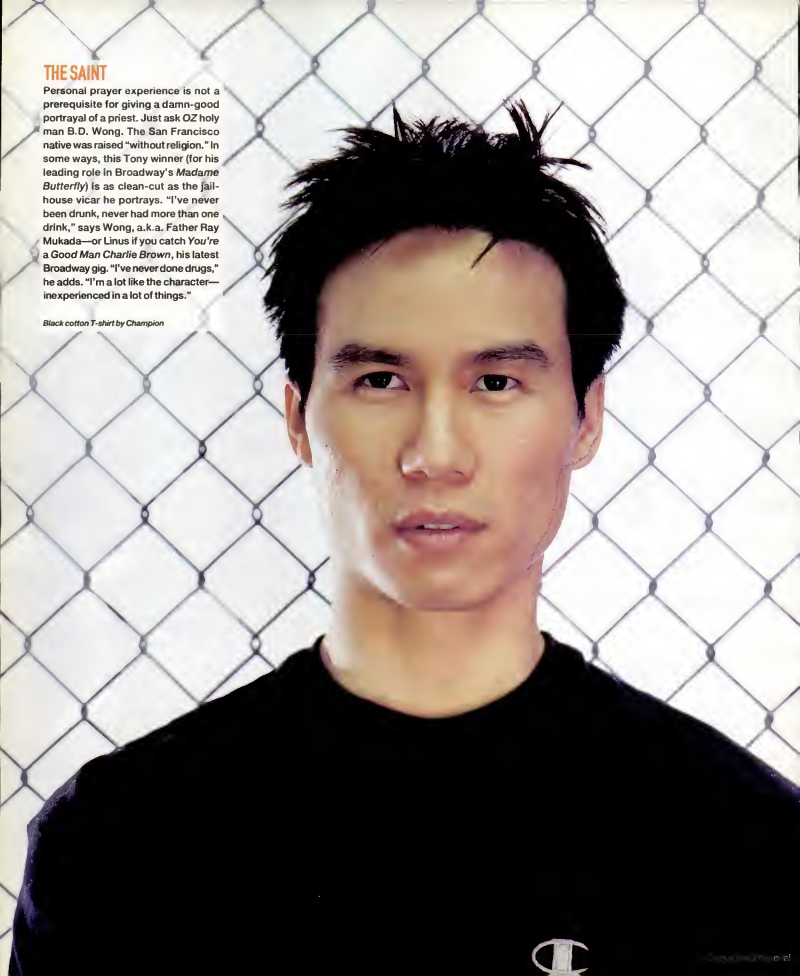
"I had a lot of [unpaid] speeding tickets," says Ernie Hudson Jr., 33, of the high school days when he got caught drag-racing in his Volkswagen Bug. Hudson (whose father, Ernie Hudson Sr., portrays the warden on the show) plays Hamid Kahn, a take-no-bull Muslim boxer and challenger for the row's righteous leader, Kareem Said (Eamonn Walker). "Years later, the police pulled me over," Hudson continues. "I had those outstanding traffic warrants and, yeah, I got arrested."


Fleck left: Black cotton sleeveless sweatshirt by GUESS; black cotton swim sweatpants by Aerie; slides by Fly; socks by Champion; black cotton swimwear by Everlast; black cotton fleecy cargo sweatpants by Polo Ralph Lauren; white tank top with gray trim by Timberland; white mesh tear-away pants by Tommy Hilfinger Athletics; slides by Fly; socks by Champion; black T-shirt by Champion; orange nylon cargo pants by \$65 Soul; boxers by Giorgio Armani; boots by Timberland; watch by Kate; beige linen button-down short-sleeve shirt and beige linen cargo pants, both by \$65 Soul; boots by Timberland; watch by GUESS

THE SAINT

Personal prayer experience is not a prerequisite for giving a damn-good portrayal of a priest. Just ask OZ holy man B.D. Wong. The San Francisco native was raised "without religion." In some ways, this Tony winner (for his leading role in Broadway's *Madame Butterfly*) is as clean-cut as the jail-house vicar he portrays. "I've never been drunk, never had more than one drink," says Wong, a.k.a. Father Ray Mukada—or Linus if you catch *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, his latest Broadway gig. "I've never done drugs," he adds. "I'm a lot like the character—inexperienced in a lot of things."

Black cotton T-shirt by Champion



A photograph of three men behind a chain-link fence. The man on the left is wearing a brown jacket and a beanie, making a hand gesture. The man in the center is shirtless, wearing a blue denim shirt over his shoulders. The man on the right is wearing an orange jumpsuit with 'VEX USA' and 'SERIAL NO. 3012' printed on it. The background is dark.

From left: Burgundy and gray cotton raglan T-shirt and burgundy cotton sweatpants, both by Phat Farm; socks by Tommy Hilfiger; Walkman by Panasonic ShockWave; light blue denim long-sleeve shirt by Levi's; navy linen cotton cargo pants by Six Soul; armband by Jutta Neumann; orange cotton nylon twill flight suit by Aurex; watch by Techno Marine. SEE THE DETAILS

gear

The Real Goods



Gucci, \$180



Emporio Armani, \$150



Tommy Hilfinger, \$65



Polo Sport, \$100



Adidas, \$130



Revo, \$119



QUES87, \$45



Nautica, \$130



Versace, \$190



Ray Ban, \$99



Timberland, \$75



Killer Loop, \$119



Wink, \$118



cK, \$125



Fendi, \$145

scoop

food for fierce fashionistas

We told you about designers starting their own record labels. Now—like a real hip hop battle—rappers are striking back and designing their own sportswear lines. This fall, Jay-Z will introduce Roc-A-Wear. DMX will represent the Ruff Ryders line, and Shaquille O'Neal will revive his TWISM (The World Is Mine) collection.... Levi's is at it again. This time they're sponsoring *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* Tour (along with Emporio Armani Fragrances).... Here comes the sun—and it's about time! Summer is one of the most fun seasons: cool clothes, new music, and fun, fun, fun. If you wanna have the hottest summer, check out these trends and give them your own twist. All you fast-talkin', wannabe-rhym'n' cats need to put your money where your mouth is and pick up some "conversational" shirts—the Chinese-dragon motifs from PNB Nation (with matching hat), Mecca USA, and Nautica Marine Denim are blazin'. For the *boriquas*: Yo, *papi*, you should keep it real in a fresh, traditional Latin guayabera shirt—see Willie Escó, Pelle Pelle, and Exsto. Ladies with some attitude should take their cues from hip hop honeys T-Boz of TLC and rapper Charli Baltimore and add a fruity strawberry hue to your hair—Fudge for Hair by Paint Box in Raspberry Beret or L'ORÉAL's Féria in Cherry Cola (it even comes in a man's version) will get the job done. Take these hints, and have a wet and wild summer!

Erin Wilbekin

sneak peek

Air Terro by Nike, \$65

Who: For folks who stay flossy, even when it's 103 degrees
When: Playing Frisbee with your peeps, walking on the beach with your boo, jet-skiing with P-Diddy in the Hamptons
Why: The combo of waterproof neoprene strapping and leather creates a lightweight sandal good for land or water
Where: Call 800-344-NIKE for store locations



catchin' rays

People's faces come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors, so picking a pair of sunglasses is a personal thing. Everyone wants a distinctive attitude and look, so shouldn't your shades suit your style? Luckily, there are tons of styles. Here's some eye protection to get you ready for the summer. SEE THE DETAILS

Kadi Aguiros

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PELLE **BI** **PELLE**
MARC BUCHANAN

Makin' Moves

Subject: Britney Spears, 17, Sagittarius, actress/singer
Work: At age 10, Spears began her career in the Off-Broadway play *Ruthless*, based on the 1956 film *The Bad Seed*. Then she got into commercials and landed a spot on the Disney Channel's *Mickey Mouse Club*. In 1997, she was signed to Jive and released her double-platinum album, ...*Baby One More Time*. She'll be appearing on the WB's *Dawson's Creek* this fall.

Idols: "I look up to Whitney Houston as a singer, Jennifer Aniston and Jennifer Love Hewitt for their style, and Lauryn Hill as an all-around artist."

Daily Routine: Spears does at least 50 sit-ups a day. "I never overeat," says the teen. "I do eat what I want, but it's done in moderation."

Secrets: "In New York, I get this zit cream from Dermatologica that's really good." The star uses a soft soap like Ivory to cleanse her face, then moisturizes with a lotion by Bath & Body Works. "For my makeup I prefer shu uemura foundation, All About Eye shadow and blush, both by NARS, tons of M.A.C lipsticks, and on special occasions I apply glitter on my face and upper body."

Biggest Disaster: "I had a photo shoot and wanted to color my hair and have it highlighted blondish. I guess the hairdresser got confused because he put red streaks and then put a color on top of that, which turned it orange," she says. "I tried to hold it in but I started crying."

Must-Haves: "I have to have mascara." Specifically, Le Grand Curl by L'ORÉAL, she says, and clear lip gloss by The Body Shop.

Transformers: Hair and makeup by Christopher Lockhart.

Katrina Lee

Face & Body: Liquid bronzer by Benefit; Glamazon loose powder by Clinique; mascara by L'ORÉAL; Le Grand Curl; Black; eyeliner by Prestige in Dark Brown; eyeshadow by SoapPit in Gilded Gems; lip gloss by NARS in Tiffany; hair mist/mousse by Nick's Shine 'n' Lift; Groom: fragrance, Tommy Girl by Tommy Hilf; bikini by Jeffrey Gibb; corset: jeans by Tommy Jeans. SEE THE DETAILS

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LOOK

screen • tv • word • tech

FORCE MGS

During the last 20 years, few movements have generated the fanaticism of either hip hop or *Star Wars*. Together they have grossed more than \$15 billion dollars. Now, as the planet waits in frenzied anticipation of George Lucas's *Star Wars*: Episode I—*The Phantom Menace*, and hip hop is poised for its biggest money-making year ever, **Harry Allen** asks, Does selling big mean selling out?

ILLUSTRATION BY THOMAS THEMES FOR VIBE

VIBE 165

When Will Smith won "Best Rap Solo Performance" at the 1999 Grammys, did you catch who was sitting behind him, giving him a congratulatory pat on the back? It was George Lucas, creator of both the \$1.8 billion-grossing *Star Wars* trilogy and its fanatically anticipated prequel, *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* (Lucasfilms), due out May 19. Lucas's brotherly nod was an apropos one. During the last 20 years, few movements in popular culture have generated the following, frenzy, or funds of either the *Star Wars* franchise or hip hop.

Released Wednesday, May 25, 1977, *Star Wars* thoroughly revolutionized the business of filmmaking by, among other things, catapulting both F/X and movie merchandising into multibillion-dollar industries. Of course, hip hop has been no slouch either. Riding onto the cultural landscape just a few short years before Lucas's triumphant juggernaut, hip hop trans-

legions of die-hard fans were disgusted by Lucas's force-feeding of furry little Ewoks to his audience. Hardcore viewers were



equally repulsed when the digitally enhanced *Star Wars* Trilogy: Special Edition was released theatrically in 1997. To them, messing with the original masterpiece was like doing a pop remix of a grimy underground bit. These moves smacked of crassness and wanton greed, as though by grabbing for cheddar Lucas was turning his art into cheese.

Of course, the feeling of being deserted by one's cultural heroes as they lunge wildly for cash is hardly new to hip hop beads. With rappers trading Lee jeans and Buick Electra 225s for Versace suits and \$345,000 Bentleys, fans have watched artists desert hip hop's fetid Bronx roots for platinum-plated jigginess.

For the second year in a row, sales for rap records will again easily top \$1 billion. At the same time, most industry experts predict that the \$115 million *The Phantom Menace* will break box-office records. All this culture in the name of commerce forces the question, Is it possible to sell big without selling out?

For Smith and Lucas, this query is particularly relevant. If there is one thing these men share, besides seating at the Grammys, it's the criticism that their ambition has been the ruin of their respective arts.

Will Smith's music—from the poppy

"Parents Just Don't Understand" (Jive, 1987) to the inspired "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It" (Columbia, 1997)—has been widely criticized as emblematic of what goes wrong when hip hop goes mainstream. It gets too cuddly and likeable, the hip hop faithful complain. Indeed, it wouldn't take much to imagine Smith's happy face on the tufted head of an Ewok.

As for Smith *Wars*, part of its legacy is that it changed Hollywood's recipe for how to make a hit movie. The trilogy's record-breaking \$5.8 billion gross (including merchandising) led to a "blockbuster" mentality and doomed the viewing public to a 20-year downward spiral of F/X-ridden, plot-compromised spectacles. In all of the worst ways, a bloodline runs between *Return of the Jedi* (Lucasfilms, 1983) and *Cow Air* (Buena Vista, 1997).

IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT LUCAS AND SMITH SHARE, IT'S THE CRITICISM THAT THEIR AMBITION HAS BEEN THE RUIN OF THEIR RESPECTIVE ARTS.

Despite predictions that *Menace* will be the highest-grossing motion picture in history, with this film Lucas has decided not to pander to the widest possible audience.

Advance word on the prequel is that there won't be an Ewok in sight. Instead, for two hours and 10 minutes, followers will thrill to the exploits of dashing Jedi (Liam Neeson and Ewan McGregor) locked in battle with a hellified, double-bladed, light-sabred villain named Darth Maul (played by martial-arts expert Ray Park). It's this kind of sharply drawn conflict that tractor-beamed fans into theaters back in 1977.

For hip hop, however, the advance word is not so clear. Last year marked the genre's best-selling year ever. Yet for many of the culture's hardcore fans, the music

which sells millions—from Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" (Capitol, 1990) to Puffy's "Can't Nobody Hold Me Down" (Bad Boy, 1997)—is typically the music they most abhor. These songs often lack the musical, lyrical, and vocal innovations that hip hop aficionados most crave. Which brings us back to the Grammys.

That starry February night, Will took home a gold gramophone in the Best Rap Solo Performance category for "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It," and quadruple-platinum-selling Jay-Z won Best Rap Album for *Vol. 2...Hard Knock Life* (Roc-A-Fella, 1998). The glitter of all that gold might lead one to think that successful hip hop music equals albums full of club hits, when in fact hip hop has always worked most powerfully when it ripped the script. For example, this is exactly what Lauryn Hill

did on her emotionally naked *The Mis-education of Lauryn Hill* (Ruffhouse/Columbia, 1998), which earned her five Grammy awards. Hill didn't rely on a



readily duplicable formula like the munched grapes or reach for the easy sentiment Lucas did with his Ewoks. Instead, she did what great artists have always done—told a compelling story beautifully and made us feel it deep in our guts.

Maybe the lesson to be learned on the eve of *The Phantom Menace*'s release is that it is possible for an artist to make enormous amounts of money yet remain true to his or her craft. Hill's success suggests that it's time hip hop moved away from an unchecked celebration of materialism toward a more nuanced examination of the human condition.

What ultimately grabs you about *The Phantom Menace* is that it's the story of a battle to save the soul of a young child, not a frolic with furry forest dwellers. Maybe it's time hip hop went after its own Ewoks with light sabers blazing. □

Phantom Menace's new-jack Jedi: Ewan McGregor as Obi-Wan (left) and Liam Neeson as Qui-Gon



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVE COOPER

formed everything it touched—turning Iowa farm boys from long-haired rockers in tight jeans into Kango-rocking would-be B-boys.

Twenty-plus years ago, *Star Wars*, like hip hop, was expected to die a quick death. Dale Pollock's *Skywalking: The Life and Films of George Lucas* (Samuel French Trade, 1990), widely considered the definitive account of the auteur's rise to prominence, details the travails of an insecure wonderkind little supported by studio executives. According to Pollock, at a screening for the 20th Century Fox board of directors shortly before the film was released, many of the higher-ups fell asleep. Many who stayed awake hated the movie. This surely played a part in the film opening in a paltry 32 theaters nationwide.

Similarly, few who recall hip hop's beginnings have forgotten the predictions that the next year would be rap music's last. Given their humble births, who would have thought that *Star Wars* and hip hop would eventually clench the globe with a titanium grip?

But cultural omnipotence has not been without its price. In the last installment of *Star Wars*, *Return of the Jedi* (1983),



Jabba the Hutt

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THE BIG PICTURE

Here's a look at the *other* hot shots brave enough to share a cineplex with Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi.
By Gary Dauphin



Swinger is *Domestic Bliss* Myers returns as Austin Powers

1999'S SECOND MUST-SEE SUMMER MOVIE

AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (NEW LINE CINEMA)

Mike Myers, star and scribe of 1997's megahit *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, re-does the tight, pinstriped mod pants for another trip to the far-out era of free love. This go-round, Austin follows his arch nemesis back to the '60s, where Dr. Evil (played again by Mr. Yeah, Baby himself) tries to permanently shrink our shagadelic hero's love mojo. (Austin's superpowers are located in his briefs, after all.) *Boogie Nights'* Heather Graham steps into Elizabeth Hurley's role as the boot-wearing love interest, while Myers continues his homage to Pink Panther Peter Sellers by playing four characters in this flick. *Powers* could become a franchise—if it survives the *Phantom Menace* juggernaut and the perils of its inaugural success. (The first film was a \$17 million spring sleeper that raked in \$54 million, whereas *Shagged* has a \$30 million budget and all the trappings of a mainline summer release.) Still, the original *Austin* was the funniest movie of 1997. Come June 11, even a total retroad should be pretty groovy.



APRIL 30

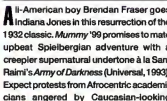
ENTRAPMENT (20TH CENTURY FOX)



Cat burglars Sean Connery and The Mask of Zorro's Catherine Zeta-Jones plot a monster heist in Y2K Malaysia in this high-tech-thievery-meets-wry-odd-couple romance. This pairing of a noble strategist and a man old enough to be her grandfather works only because Connery is the coolest man alive. Regardless, let's hope for everyone's sake that Double-O-Seventy keeps his pants on.

MAY 7

THE MUMMY (UNIVERSAL)



All-American boy Brendan Fraser goes Indiana Jones in this resurrection of the 1932 classic. *Mummy '99* promises to mate upbeat Spielbergian adventure to la Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness* (Universal, 1993). Expect protests from Afrocentric academicians angered by Caucasian-looking ancient Egyptians and an evil wrapped one named Imhotep (raised fist optional).

MAY 12

TRIPPIN' (ROQUE)



Dooty Call meets United Negro College Fund commercial in this low-budget high school comedy about the misadventures of Greg "G" Reed (Deon Richmond), an upstanding but distracted kid daydreaming his way through high school. Our prediction? *Trippin'* will mix teen hormonal high jinks with positive sermonizing (stay in school, don't do drugs). The younger set should get a rise out of watching their peers act the horny fool.

MAY 14

BESEGED (FINE LINE FEATURES)



Once again, Thandie Newton (*Beloved*, 1998)—our favorite hyper-talented indie morsel—finds herself playing a slave/domestic love object. In *Besieged*, she's an African-immigrant maid who rarely speaks a word to her Italian boss but ends up working overtime in massah's fantasies and his boudoir. The power dynamics are borderline disturbing—just enough to peak our interest in *Besieged*, the only must-see art-house pick of the season.

MAY 28

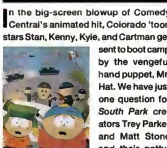
THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR (SONY)



Hollywood's virtual-reality elevator stops on *The Thirteenth Floor*, a dark thriller about a flesh-and-blood programmer (the little-known Craig Bierko) accused of murder who jacks into his VR creation to clear his name. *Floor* should pull in the hardcore cyberpunk heads, but given the wide audience swath cut by *The Matrix* (Warner Bros.), *Thirteenth* could turn out to be an unlucky number.

JUNE 18

SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER AND UNCUT (PARAMOUNT)



In the big-screen blowup of Comedy Central's animated hit, Colorado 'toon stars Stan, Kenny, Kyle, and Cartman get sent to boot camp by the vengeful hand puppet, Mr. Hat. We have just one question for *South Park* creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone and their potty-mouthed juveniles: How many times can Kenny die in 90 minutes?

JUNE 18

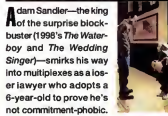
TARZAN (WALT DISNEY)



Disney's African invasion (*The Lion King* franchise, the Wild Kingdom theme park) continues with this darkly drawn but reportedly hyper-PC animated epic. *Tarzan* should have little trouble howling drunk dips in every burger joint in the land. But don't be surprised if the Mouse House gets trampled by *South Park* fans who'd rather see the Lord of the Jungle kiss Cartman's fat ass.

JUNE 25

BIG DADDY (COLUMBIA/SONY)



Adam Sandler—the king of the surprise blockbuster (1998's *The Waterboy* and *The Wedding Singer*)—smirks his way into multiplexes as a loser lawyer who adopts a 6-year-old to prove he's not commitment-phobic. This should be one of this spring's dumber movies. (In one scene he teaches the kid proper wall-pissing technique.) But since every season needs a stupid sleeper, Sandler will likely be laughing past groaning critics all the way to the bank.



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JOKERS WILD!

Comedic royals Steve Harvey and Cedric the Entertainer riff on Ray Charles, white girls, family feuds, and the hotness of Foxy "Tootsie Roll" Brown. *By Gabrielle L. Gabrielle*

It's tough being on top. Just ask Steve Harvey, star of The WB's *The Steve Harvey Show*, emcee of the syndicated *It's Showtime at the Apollo*, and a featured comic on the hugely successful *Kings of Comedy 1999* tour—which is expected to rake in almost \$20 million in funny money. It's bad enough that you lose your privacy, fans hound you on your off time, and distant cousins hit you up for loot. To top it off, after a sold-out show at Cleveland State University Convocation Center, you get stalked by a VIBE reporter camping outside your dressing room.

When a beleaguered Harvey finally let us in, we were surprised to find him still trading riffs with his pal Cedric the Entertainer. Not wanting to impose on the put-upon star, we just turned on the recorder and let the longtime friends roll.

Cedric: Have you ever fucked anyone up, Steve?

Steve: I've thought about it. Several times today, in fact. Most of them are my damn family members. I just wanted to haul

off and jack-slap the shit out of my sister. And I'd like to bitch-slap all my cousins and nephews. They fuckin' beg all the time: "Auntie need a hip operation, think you could pay for it, Steve?" "I just got a new house, but I need you to make the down payment." *I'm not the home-loan company!* What I really hate is when people say, "I know you got it." You're damned right I got it! And I'm gonna keep it!

Okay, then. Since VIBE is in the house, I think we should talk a little about the hip hop world.

I think Foxy Brown is absolutely delicious. She reminds me of a Tootsie Roll in pumps.

And what about Lil' Kim?

Lil' Kim? See, I thought that was the same person [laughs]. Lil' Kim is the type of person that when you're with your mother you say, "That's disgusting!" But when you're with your boys you say, "Boy, oh boy! That would be me and her and myself me."

I love hip hop. Busi Rhymes has a very original style. That's what I love about him. And when you meet him, he's down to earth, real cool people.

Yeah, I've become more of a hip hop fan the more I meet the artists and rap with them about their philosophies instead of just assuming—which is wrong—that if I hear some crazy gangsta rap on TV, that [all rappers] are just blurring out obscenities with no substance or depth. When you sit these guys down, like Puff or Snoop, you think, Hey, these brothers right here have it together.

I definitely trip off how hip hop has grown, how everyone is talking about it everywhere. In comedy, we don't stand on our issues like they do, do we?

I try to stand on some issues, but if there's a laugh involved, I'll go with the flow.

What about the handicapped? You ever talk about handicapped people?

I've done a couple of handicapped things, and it didn't work out in my favor. I had a show in Boston once. I told a great joke about being blind, and little did I know the Cambridge School for the Blind had been invited. I just went on and on about being blind. Nothing was happening out there, and I didn't know why.

And then out of nowhere Ray Charles stepped

up and slapped the shit out of you. But first someone had to tell him when he had the right guy [laughter]. Speaking of being blind, have you ever been with a white woman?

I have no personal experience to relate to you on that issue for the sake of my career, which you just tossed into shambles with that question. I'm gonna have every black woman hiding in the bushes waiting on me. I'll tell you one thing, though [motions toward a big-breasted white girl in the room], I wouldn't have no problem with that [laughs like a dog]! So Ced, what's the hardest part about being famous?

When you're in public with your daughter or your mother, or you're trying to have a private family moment and someone comes up and says, "Oh, bi, bow ya doin'?" How's Steve doin'?"

Some people can be so intrusive. Technically, we only owe you what you pay for. We owe you a great show when you pay for a ticket. When you turn on your TV, we owe you 22 minutes of the funniest stuff that we can put on. Out in public, we really don't owe you anything. □



TLC

Fan Mail



NAS

I Am...



2Pac

Greatest Hits



Blackstreet

Finally



Ginuwine

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FIVE ALIVE

A day in the life of the new **Palm V**

The new Palm V doesn't just store contacts, it scores them. At four ounces and half the thickness of the Palm III and Palm IIIx models, the \$449 super-sleek son of the Palm Pilot (from 3Com) will get more looks than the next man's Rolex. Use the stylus to jot down the names of your new fans (up to 6,000), then share the data with your PC. Hundreds of available software titles and funky accessories make the Palm V the only gadget you'll need all day, whether you're getting business—or getting busy. *Dave Katz*

7:00 a.m.

You're awakened by Palm's built-in alarm and see a flashing reminder that it's your little sister's birthday (Birthdate by Fah!, \$19.95). But you have a plane to catch. So record a memo to caller using your attachable voice recorder (JetTalker by DynaFirm, \$169).

8:00 a.m.

Traffic is thick, so connect your Palm to Earthmate, a mini Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver from DeLorme (\$149) that draws you a shortcut on its preloaded road maps.

10:00 a.m.

You're about to board the plane when your Palm (Synapse Pager Card, \$169, PageMart Wireless) receives an alphanumeric message from your boss: MEETING WITH PAWS CLIENT MOVED TO BEVERLY HILLS GOLF COURSE. ALERT! ALERT! Make the change on Palm's calendar, then plug your Palm Modem (\$129) into your cell phone to e-mail the good news to the rest of the group. E-mail Ltr Sie tool

11:00 a.m.

Other passengers on the plane watch You've Got Mail; you read yours, then play some Palm games. After an hour of "Froggy" (\$10, www.pilotfan.com/froggy), check out last night's basketball highlights with InfoRover Select software (\$29.95), then settle into one of the specially formatted novels you downloaded off the Web.

3:00 p.m.

Jet-lagged, you arrive at the golf course to discover that the only thing worse than your client's dice are your French skills, so use Concept Kitcher's Small Talk translation program (available for Spanish, French, German, Japanese, or Italian, \$79.99) to help along the conversation.

4:00 p.m.

Your client is so impressed with IntelliGolf (by Karrier Communications, \$79.95 with special golf-cart mount), which keeps track of your stats, that he doesn't even notice you're letting him win.

6:00 p.m.

To celebrate his victory, your client lets you take him to his favorite steak house, so strap your Palm onto your wrist with the Peel-It wearable PDA case, and you're off (\$49.95, Orange-Ozang). If DietLog can't keep your appetite in check, Excer-Log will get you back at the gym tomorrow (\$89 for bundle, Soft-Care).

8:00 p.m.

As expected, the bill is as heavy as the food. Instead of playing credit-card roulette, use your pocket Quicken software (\$39.95, LandWare) to figure out which card isn't maxed out.

9:00 p.m.

You head downtown to your client's favorite nightclub, where they serve more than drinks. Log all your expenses—including those lap dances—using WaterWare's ExpensePlus software (\$69). After all, it is business!

10:00 p.m.

Your client tells you he has to go to another "meeting," but needs your number. Too drunk to lift a pen, you infrared-transfer your business card into his Palm V.

12:00 a.m.

Tammy Knockers, one of the fine "entertainers" leads you back to your hotel. Congrats! It looks like you might finally be able to give your Palm a rest.

GRAB A HANDFUL:

(From top): These dual-action styli twist to reveal ballpoint pens—Palm V Dual Action Stylus (standing), \$99.95; Cross Duo, \$35. The Palm V is here (top center): Pilotgear H.Q. Stylus, \$14.95. Protect your Palms with these high-tech cases (at left, from top): Palm V Hard Case, \$39.95; RhinoSkin Titanium Hardcase, \$99.95; Palm V Executive Cover Pack, \$24.95. For more Palm goodies, check out *Tap Magazine* at www.tapmagazine.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PRODUCTS YOU SEE HERE, SEE THE DETAILS.

tech

CYBERMIX

You're on your way to spin at the hottest club in town with all your precious wax in the trunk. Then you get carjacked. Two stinking gunmen jump in the front seat and punch the accelerator. You've escaped with your life, but you've lost the gig, the records, and the thrill to spin.

Most club DJs play for free. They really get paid to transport their fragile, often irreplaceable vinyl albums. And what are you supposed to do when your only copy of "Super Sporn" gets scratched? Such concerns motivated former graf legend Colin Turner and seasoned reggae selector Anthony "Yonnie" Wright to create SpinStation (www.spinstation.com), a revolutionary computer program that eliminates most of the hazards faced by professional DJs. Combining MP3 sound-file compression with jam-tested design, the SpinStation is more than the ultimate digital crate. It's also loaded with DJ's little-helper features that Yonnie says will "make an average DJ good and a good DJ amazing."

When it's time for a gig, your turntables and records stay home while you carry a DJ mixer and any high-powered IBM-compatible computer. All your wax is saved as CD-quality MP3 files on the computer's hard drive—sorted by artist, style, beats per minute or anything else you want. You can match two songs' BPMs at the touch of a button, or add in backspins and scratches. Now, this device is *not* for everybody. You wouldn't challenge the Invisible Scratch Pickle to a spin-off, but for the average club DJ, just having your crates organized and scratch-free is worth the \$399 software (pre-built systems available for up to \$4,500).

But can it rock a party? While Yonnie tested SpinStation at Brooklyn's Club Callaloo, the crowd couldn't tell his cybermix from the vinyl method—unless they saw the eerie glow of his computer monitor. "People didn't even know the difference," he says with a laugh. "You can play five seconds of a song and then, *boom!* You're on to the next without a dip, with nothing to put back in its sleeve."

"I don't think SpinStation opens the market up to suckers," says Turner. "Software will never know the true art of the DJ, which is how to feel out the crowd and build a vibe. That is what separates the pros from the wannabes." That and not losing your records.

Rob Kenner

Last night a DJ saved my life from a broken...record? DJs Colin (left) and Yonnie create the turntable for 2006.



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Nokia 282, \$99-\$149

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"It's a makeup compact!" Nope, not quite.

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Using the easy-to-read screen, you can store up to 75 names and numbers and assign different rings to 12 predefined incoming callers so you know whether it's your old boo or that new one calling. The 282's analog service may seem tired to your digitally enabled Enterprise shippers, but you'll get the last laugh with superior service and the flyest phone in the galaxy.

Mark Brooks



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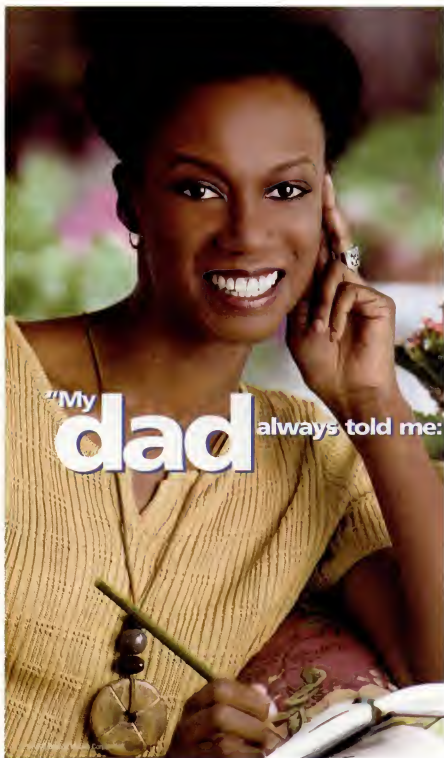
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REVOLUTIONS



SLICK RICK
'THE ART OF
STORYTELLING'
DEF JAM

BY KRIS EX

"Since I came outta jail, seems the whole planet gone bananas," Slick Rick observes on "Street Talkin'," from *The Art of Storytelling*, his first real long-player since creating what is, without question, one of the finest hip hop albums of all time, 1988's *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* (Def Jam).

Two subsequent LPs, 1991's *The Ruler's Back* and '94's *Behind Bars*, were piecemealed by his record label while the patch-eyed kid was on the other side of the wall.

A cursory glance at recent world events affirms Rick's position: Here in the States, the President is impeached by a bunch of hatas who wasn't getting none; back in the rhymers' native England, the Prince Charming/damsel-in-distress fantasy is shattered when Princess Di doesn't live happily ever after and, to add insult to injury, Lennox Lewis, Britain's Great 'Locked Hope,' gets shafted out of the undisputed

heavyweight title in front of a world TV audience. Yet on his new album, Rick remains unflappable. Like Jake Blues or that pimp in *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* (You do remember how the god hit the streets rocking those fierce-ass fish-tank platforms, don't you?), the Ruler steps back into the game determined to make the reigning players gather round and genuflect before him.

And they do. A veritable royal court of hip-hop luminaries—Q-Tip, Wyclef, DJ Rev Run, Snoop Dogg, Nas, OutKast, Raekwon, Canibus—drop by to shower the Slickster with pledges of allegiance. But don't take their word for it. Take Rick's own. Same as ever, he's never reluctant to engage in a healthy bit of vainglorious self-appraisal. A Jay-Z and Zsa Zsa Gabor love child couldn't churn out more self-aggrandizing witticisms. A thousand feedlots of cattle couldn't pop as much shit.

"It's kinda outlandish / Rastas even say 'A what kinda fine young man dis?'" quips Rick on "Fresh," featuring Jermaine Dupri. Over the ethereal walls and stunted piano chords of the Trackmasters-produced "Me & Nas Bring It to You

RICK REMAINS A KANGLED HEAD AND ICED-DOWN NECK ABOVE THE COMPETITION BY FOLLOWING THE FIRST RULE OF FICTION 101: SHOW, DON'T TELL.

Hardest," he goes on, "Homosexuals smirk / Conversin' / Say 'That nigga fox is working, girlfriend.' Billionaire white chicks, construction workers, aliens, corpses, the sun, chandeliers—to hear Rick tell it, they're all in awe of him. 'I Own America' finds Mama Nature herself deferring to his greatness: 'Rain find ways not to fall on my head-top.'"

He strays from this theme to ill effect on "Kill Niggaz," a rash of tongue-in-cheek murders on wax, which sounds as if it was done just to prove a point. Yes, his wordplay is top-notch, but Rick's a lover, not a fighter—the song feels like Britney Spears doing Lil' Kim. Meanwhile, "Adults Only" graphically details Rick's preference for anal sex. With lines like, "Still in the pussy / Then asked it if it slipped out / She said, 'Pardon the puddle' / Spread open her cheeks / Pushed hard in her buttohole / Wasn't a bad date at all," it's a testament to Rick's comedic skills and likelihood that such scenarios amuse rather than repulse.

The charming "Who Rotten 'Em" comes across as a virtual stage play. This-plan Rick portrays an ancient Egyptian slave who must impress the pharaoh or be sent to the lions: "Motherfucker got some nerve, said, 'Bring slave forward, let me observe' / He asked me my name and started badgering me / 'Ricky, what? / 'Ricky, Your Majesty' / And bowed because I had to / 'Kick a rap / That shit better sound phat, too.'" It's here that the art of storytelling is fully revealed: Rick remains a Kangled head and Iced-down neck above the competition by following the first rule of Fiction 101: Show, don't tell.

Thoroughly entertaining throughout, Rick spins unique couplets, melds vocal inflections, and breaks those nasal vocals into song. He's backed by a collection of sparse bass drums, abundant snares, and long stabs of deep rhythm provided by folks like Large Professor (l), Clark Kent, Kid Capri, S&S, Rashad Smith, and Dame Grease—many of whom abandon their signature sounds in reverence of the Ruler's style. The result? Party numbers that bounce like the participants in a San Francisco car chase. Melodic jams that pull you into a smooth, easy bob. (Wise choices considering that Rick's core fan base is around the three-decade age mark.)

"You old-ass rapper!" screams a heckler who can't grasp the appeal of the Ruler's exquisite haberdashery and track finery on "I Run This." While a tailor-made track throbs behind him like a preorgasmic clitt, Rick stays unfazed, lounging comfortably on his throne: "You got it / But can he still / Sevort?" Other words rap more clever / Like no other younger rapper walking could ever?"

Yes, he can. So y'all microwave macks and overnight hacks best to hide ya' hoies. This time around, the Ruler really is back—rocking gold, furs, and Wallys, pushing a Rolls Royce in these days of platinum, leathers, 'gators, and Bentleys. But fuck, the nigga ain't just old-school, he's a classic. Kiss his feet and be gone from his presence, you peons.

CHANTÉ MOORE 'THIS MOMENT IS MINE' MCA

Way back in 1992, Chanté Moore turned speaker cones to mush with her debut, *Precious*, which was lusty and lusty in all the right places and established the heavy-lidded diva as a force to be reckoned with. In 1995, she made a so-so second album, *A Love Supreme*, and has occasionally been the prettier partner in duets with crooners such as Boyz II Men and Keith Washington. *This Moment Is Mine* is Moore's first album in four years, and the delay between projects has many wondering, What up with that? Whatever the reason, it's good to have her back where she belongs.

Unlike R&B's paper-doll Lolitas, Moore isn't afraid to act her age. She's aware of the thin line that separates sexy from trashy, and that self-confidence is what gives Moore her edge as a vocalist. Instead of performing melodramatic calisthenics, Moore lets her throaty, understated phrasing glide over the album's gentle grooves—half of which were produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis—and lets the rest take care of itself. This songbird prefers subtlety to brassiness. Even when she boasts on the first single that "Chanté's Got a Man," it's only to provide encouragement for single women who are trying to get their groove back. Here's hoping Moore's album title proves prophetic.

Marc Weingarten



CLIFF JONES 'RHYTHM & PRAISE' BLACKGROUND/ATLANTIC

From the Staple Singers' down-home celebrations to Al Green's sumptuous—but-conflicted songs of praise, R&B and gospel have forever been linked. Together they seem to tell every man's existential tale. With

his debut, *Rhythm & Praise*, Cliff Jones gives a nod to both traditions with full-on '90s flavor, compliments of producers such as Fanatic, Night Flight, and Trackmasters.

The 27-year-old Washington, D.C., native boldly goes where few have gone before when it comes to craftily marrying genres. He takes the Isley Brothers' 1975 classic "For the Love of You" and builds it into a tower of power with "Living All Because of You." His skills are also notable on "One More Chance," Jones's idea of what his late friend the Notorious B.I.G.'s message to God would be if

he were alive. Additionally, his powerful vocals on soothing songs like "Call on Me" might spark deserved comparisons to the great Bobby Womack.

Jones might have grown up on the Lord's music. And, true, for a minute he may have forsaken the church for the streets. Whatever. It's all good. He's back, steeping "the message" in hip hop and soul. Jones's songs are worthy not only of praise but also heavy airplay.

Martinebury



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PRODUCERS SPOTLIGHT: THESE YOUNG TRACKMASTERS MAY NOT BE HOUSEHOLD NAMES YET, BUT TRUST THEIR HOT BEATS WILL BE BLOWING FROM YOUR SPEAKERS BEFORE 1999 ENDS.

★ **TIM AND BOB:** You know you're good when one of the best producers in music is asking you for tracks. That's exactly what happened to Atlanta-based production team Tim and Bob when the one and only Dr. Dre called. The collaboration between Tim Kelley and Bob Robinson, who produced Jon B's 1997 platinum single, "They Don't Know," and Dre, one of the founding fathers of gangsta rap, resulted in two brash songs for Dre's upcoming sophomore compilation, *The Chronic 2000* (Aftermath/Interscope). "Hey You" is a rolling stampee of piano chords and bass kicks; on another pop-chart chaser, "Malibu Dre," the Doctor drops lines like "When I bounce in the Bentley on the freeway bang in *The Chronic*, / It ain't a classic, it's a cliché." Tim and Bob have quickly accumulated a discography that includes everyone from Boyz II Men and Monica to 112, and fans can anticipate even more from them this year. Both producers are songwriters and instrumentalists who developed their skills in Detroit with other future stars like Tony Rich and Bad Boy Hit-

man Mario Winans before relocating to Atlanta to work with superproducer Dallas Austin. Now this laid-back duo is working with Mista, Talvin Braxton (Toni's sister), Dave Hollister, Mr. Dalmir (formerly of Jodeci), and Joe, who Tim and Bob have already laced with ballads like "I'm Missing You" and the aptly titled "Beautiful." They have also recently signed a multimillion-dollar publishing deal with DreamWorks and have a roster of their own acts including songstress Shawn Riley and singing girl group About Face. But even with all this success, Tim and Bob remain refreshingly down-to-earth, which

★ **THE NEPTUNES:** You remember when Noreaga's "SuperThug" supernova played for the first time in 1998? It was like nothing you'd ever heard before, like a musical gumbo with chunks of Louisiana bounce, Queens street rock, and a twist of Middle Eastern snake charm. "But what *killed* it," says the Neptunes' Pharrell Williams, "was when I sung that little hook, 'This is the life of a superstar / The Neptunes and Noreaga the limit is the skyyyy.'"

Williams, along with his partner, Chad Hugo, produced Nore's breakthrough hit. And he's right, it was "SuperThug's" adrenaline beat that really set it off for the Virginia Beach, Va., duo. The Neptunes, who started out producing completely contrary but equally moving material such as SWV's 1996 "Use Your Heart" and Blackstreet's 1994 "Tonight's the Night" are extremely diverse in their talents. They're currently reading albums from their male rap duo the Clipse (Elektra), whose first single, "The Funeral," is already tearing up mix shows, and for their female funk/pop/soul vocalist Kelis (Virgin), who is everything Scary Spice wishes she could be. But Williams and Hugo aren't finished redefining hip hop for the new millennium, as they take Ol' Dirty Bastard to new heights of operatic insanity on tracks like "I Got Your Money" and "Cold Blooded." They also bring in the Cherry Poppin' Daddies for a Beanie Man swing song called "Ola" and even give alternative heroine Björk some extra flavor. The Neptunes are crossing all boundaries and genres—all the way to the bank.



(From left) Bob Robinson, David Hollister, Tim Kelley



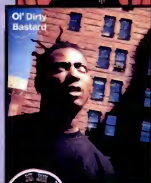
Malik Pendleton



★ **MALIK PENDLETON:** Ever grace the radio with his whiskey-smooth voice, you will have already swung, sweated, and maybe even sexed to his music. How can that be? Well, even though this self-proclaimed "Bad Ass Little Kid" from Linden, N.J., is dropping his debut album entitled *Look Around* (Atlantic) this summer, he's already made his name as a producer whose soulful tracks have blessed the likes of 702, SWV, Zhané, and Changing Faces. And then came the turning point: "I wanted to submit some songs to Mary J. Blige for her *Share My World* (MCA, 1997) album, but I kept getting the roundabout," says Pendleton. "When I finally got to the studio to meet her and saw producers like Herb Middleton and Kenny Greene, I didn't think I



Mary J. Blige



(From left) Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo



This season the look is lace, and designer Byron Lars shows us why! Sexy, playful and easy to wear, lace goes with almost anything, like Byron's white cotton twist front shirt pictured here. Accessories by Misha McGlow. Hair by African Pride.

I want her hair!

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Keep Your Head Up.

JA RULE 'VENNI, VETTI, VECCHI' DEF JAM

It's nearly impossible for an MC to steal the show while guest-starring on a Jay-Z song, but when Ja Rule's strident vocals come in at the end of Jigga's bouncy "Can I Get A..." (Roc-A-Fella, 1998), you have to shake your ass just a little bit harder. That's exactly why the title of Ja's bellicose debut, *Venni, Vetti, Vecchi*—Latin for "I came, I saw, I conquered"—makes so much sense. He intends to do just that.

The first single, "Holla, Holla," is a sweltering call-and-response track that picks up where "Can I Get A..." left off. Then Ja reunites with his Murder Inc. cohorts Jay-Z and DMX for the sequel to their 1998 killer cut, "Murdergram," with the equally homicidal "It's Murda." This cut not only bangles, but it leaves bloodthirsty fans dying for the release of Murder Inc.'s upcoming album. Ja gives a galvanized thug pledge of allegiance on the ferocious "Niggaz Theme," on which record-exec extraordinaire Irv Gotti adds an N.W.A.-inspired hook ("It's plain to see / You can't see me / 'Cause I'mma be a nigger for life").

Unfortunately, the rest of *Venni, Vetti, Vecchi* is hampered by colorless production. "Let's Ride" is a schlock attempt at capturing the ATL-bounce vibe, while the beat for "Only Begotten Son" sounds like recycled elevator music.

Ja is definitely a superstar in the making, but he desperately needs tighter tracks to complement his MC skills. Only then can Ja fulfill his own prophecy and start to rule hip hop for real.

Shaheem Reid



FUNDISHA 'NO MORE TEARS' EPIC

On Fundisha's debut, the sultry, sultry chanteuse casts herself as a hard-luck victim who finds redemption in the big kiss-off. The song titles tell a sorry tale: "It's Over Now," "Love Don't Live Here," "No More Tears," "Why Did You Put Your Hands on Me?" But rather than cry into her pillow, Fundisha prefers to blow elegant raspberries.

Hewing closely to the successful game plan mapped out by R&B's myriad *diva* supremes, the New Jersey native swirls a lazy Susan of styles before the listener. "L.D.D. Blues" is a

bump-and-grind ballad whose cautionary "my man could be your man or her man" chorus is the greatest jilted lover's battle cry since Mary J.'s 1995 "Not Gon' Cry." "If You Knew" and "It's Over Now" find Fundisha testifying over stutter-step beats that make her sound like a dissident from TLC.

Unfortunately, *No More Tears* is also larded with ordinary inner-city case histories about single moms and abandoned kids. Lines like "My father used to drink a lot / Mamma used to walk around smoking pot"

from "Never Taught Never Told" veer perilously close to *Saturday Night Live*-style parody. Still, Fundisha's got flavor and sass to spare, and *No More Tears* lands enough punches to make her a legit contender.

Marc Weingarten



BOOM SHOTS

BY ROB KENNER

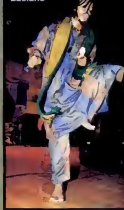
High noon, Goree Island, off the coast of Senegal. Four Rastamen approach the brooding fort-like structure where the horrors of the Western passage began for millions of newly enslaved Africans. The Rastamen have traveled from Jamaica, at the behest of Senegal's musical scion, Baaba Maal. Philip "Fatis" Burrell (the producer behind Reggae's red-hot Xterminator label) is there along with singers Mikey General, Luciano, and a wiry young deejay called Sizzla. All four have toured the world together, playing roots reggae. But they haven't come here to play.

Even the noontime sun cannot penetrate the blackness within the slave island's dungeons. "They have a door called the Door of No Return," Mikey General recalls. "They said that we wouldn't return, but we did. We broke that spell." All four returned from the journey to the island changed men. Sizzla's recordings and performances came to be dominated by wrathful outbursts and a tendency to "fire-burn" everyone from the Queen of England to Jesus Christ. **As Sizzla blazed even hotter, Luciano seemed to become more serene. He'd stand on stage, Bible in hand, asking audiences to join him in prayer.** "Ulfenour Mouve" wistfully questioned the sincerity of his friends, while "Final Call" and "Hold Strong" evoked images of Armageddon. Just as his fourth album for Xterminator, *Sweep Over My Soul* (VP), was completed, Luciano parted company with Fatis, breaking up one of the most successful teams in reggae.

"It wasn't the music, it was certain principles," explains General, who chose to leave Xterminator with his brethren. "Luciano complained to Fatis about some of Sizzla's lyrics. We still love Sizzla, but he's a bit hard of hearing." "This is a conflict of interest," says Luciano. "In many cases I see bredda Sizzla not really acknowledging the truth. Just like the prodigal son, if he's not ready to reconcile with the Almighty, he can go back to his father's place after him get lick up an ting out ah road. I don't have any malice for him. I hope that the Almighty will guide him as he unravels the truth."

Midnight, Oracabessa, Jamaica. The night air crackles with approaching electrical storms and vehement debate. "Look at that star in the sky," says Mutabaruka, the outspoken Rastafarian poet. "Can you tell me who put it there?" "Yes, my brother," replies Luciano. "The Lord God Jah-hoviah, our Lord and savior Jesus-Christ who now reveal himself in the personality of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I—Jah... Raastafari!" "You know that for sure?" Muta challenges, testing the limits of the singer's faith. Troubled at his radical skepticism, Luciano's thoughts coalesce into a single question. "Who do you pray to?" "I pray to myself," Muta begins, but before he can explain how God does not live in the sky, Luciano prepares to leave. Then, with something like sadness in his voice, he adds: "Then I pray for you."

Luciano



HEAVY ROTATION:

Fahrenheit — *Fringe to Fore* (Mystic Urchin Music)
Various Artists — *Studio One Showcase Volume 1* (Heartbeat)
Tantita Metro & Devorato — *Everyone Falls in Love* (VP)
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forces to be reckoned with. Their earlier records—Cibo's American debut, *Viva! la Woman* (Warner Bros., 1996), and Luscious's first three Grand Royal offerings, 1992's *In Search of Manny*, 1994's *Natural Ingredients*, and 1996's *Fever in Fever Out*—might've been ahead of their time soundwise and ideologically, but they lacked the dynamic songwriting that would've separated them from the pack.

Cibo Matto's new *Stereotype A* is a punchy, danceable collection of original instrumentation and sampling with flashes of '80s electro pop. "Working for Vacation" features a sharp organ riff and lyrics detailing a sense of personal displacement that seems a by-product of life on the busy streets of Manhattan. The cute, quirky pair spend much of the album tackling issues close to home: love affairs, friendships, public image, and—get this—kitchen utensils. "Flowers," a petal-light bossa nova tune, alerts men to the futility of flora as a make-up implement, while the rap-friendly "Sci-Fi Wasabi"—ostensibly about cycling around Manhattan—recounts the difficulties of city existence, though it ends with the line, "Downtown still sends me up in the sky." Pleasant.

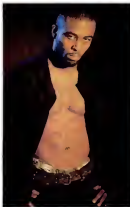
Over the years, Luscious Jackson's song structures have grown increasingly complex. On *Natural Ingredients*, the mix was simpler: guitars playing alongside beat boxes. *Fever*'s sound was more mature, with timed snippets and space-age sound effects complementing rather than overrunning the gentle melodies. The new *Electric Honey* picks up where *Fever* left off, but the songs sound more open and seem more at ease with their pop sensibility. Sometimes it works, as on "Nervous Breakthrough," which puts a house beat underneath lead singer Jill Cunliffe's airy vocals. But at other times, one suspects that certain elements—drum 'n' bass breakbeats, for instance, courtesy of British DJ Alex Young—have been added just because they happen to be *en vogue*.

Their shared status as downtown darlings isn't enough to make Cibo Matto and Luscious Jackson really matter musically. A middling record is a middling record. But each of these groups show a willingness to push themselves further, taking experimental approaches to creating what is essentially pop music. Who knows, maybe their next records will provide some powerful substance to match that superior sense of style.

Chido Nkwocha



BLACK ROB 'LIFE STORY' BAD BOY



Black Rob's debut, *Life Story*, is a grimy adventure that'll probably make him a feared man in corporate America, but revered in the hip hop world. He's incredibly adept at constructing graphic, autobiographical episodes and intricate tales. With his adamantyne gaze, raspy voice, and stormy aura, Black Rob is the closest thing to the late, great Notorious B.I.G.

Replete with fluid production from the Hitmen, *Life Story* is an emotional ride full of hardship and pain, especially the haunting title track, on which Rob recalls growing up with an alcoholic mother. He seeks to avenge a friend's murder on the thunderous "Lookin' at Us," featuring Cee-Lo, and dreams of a better life on the intense "Can I Live," featuring the Lox. And the rowdy hit single "I Dare You," which first appeared on the 1998 soundtrack for the movie *Slam* (Immortal/Epic), sounds just as good on the hundredth listen as it did on the first.

However, *Life Story* does have its occasional detractions, like Puffy's irritating ad-libs on "Make It Hot" and Puff's wannabe-rough rhymes on "Down the Line." Also, "Spanish Fly" is a little too light and fluffy to suit Rob's hardcore style. But that doesn't change the fact that although the album gets down and dirty, *Life Story* is a breath of fresh air.

Miguel Burke

PRODIGY 'PRESENT THE DIRTCHAMBER SESSIONS VOLUME ONE' XL

You've probably never heard of DJ Liam Howlett, even though many loyal fans consider him the mastermind behind Prodigy's music. For years, the visual spectacle of fire-startin' Keith Flint, bare-chested Maxim Reality, and macaroni-limbed Leroy Thornhill has provided a convenient foil to the British dance-rock band's cliché-strewn recorded work. Now, Howlett has come clean on *Present the Dirtchamber Sessions Volume One*.

Pilfering through his personal record collection, he unearthed nearly every single act that has helped shape Prodigy's beat-infused racket. So we get the Ultramagnetic MC's doing "Give the Drummer Some" (1988), which provided the scandalous catchphrase for 1997's "Smack My Bitch Up." We get Public Enemy, whose apocalyptic sirens and breaks Prodigy lifted wholesale for its production department.

Then we get the Sex Pistols, who provide the original punk-clown blueprint for Flint. Howlett's old nemeses, the Beastie Boys, even get a spin as "Time to Get Ill" (1986) slyly gets pushed into Barry White's "I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little More Baby" (1973). There are other eclectic names in the mix as well (Grandmaster Flash, Jane's Addiction, Herbie Hancock), but with more than 50 tracks crammed into less than an hour of space with little-to-no apparent planning, the only thing we're left with is an undercooked Prodigy album.

Aldin Vaziri



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FLY TRACKS OR WACK WAX? ASK OUR RESIDENT CRITICS, A&B.

"Get Ready" MASE *Double (w/ Bun B)*



A: Is this "Night to Remember"? **B:** Yeah, it's that Shalamar shit. You can't blame Mase for wanting people to dance. **A:** Oh, God. The thing is that he doesn't change up. Everything he does is completely indistinguishable. **B:** True, but this is a fun song. It's not *supposed* to be deep. **A:** His problem is that he has no talent to speak of. **B:** You're so *harsh*. We'll see what he does with this album. He'll get at least a million in sales, even if you think his 15 minutes are almost over. **A:** Do we have to listen to the whole

thing? **B:** [laughs] You know, the first time I heard Mase on a mix tape he was a pretty good M.C. **A:** No he wasn't! His subject matter may have been different, but that doesn't change what he is inside: *wack!*

"Stimulate Me," DESTINY'S CHILD *with MOCHA (Music Inspired by the Motion Picture Life (Rock Lizard/ InterScope))*

A: It reminds me of "No, no, no, no, no... Yeah, yeah, yeah." **B:** *New!* This has a little funky beat to it. That's that Mocha chick from Timbaland's camp, yo. **A:** She sounds like Missy with a head cold. **B:** [laughs] Naw, but she has a little sexy voice. You can hear it. **A:** Okay. **B:** I think she sounds cute and the beat is funky. **A:** It's been done before. **B:** This song is *not* bad. **A:** It's fast-forward music. **B:** It's cool.



"Back in the Days," TRICK DADDY *www.thug.com (Big-N-Slide)*



A: The return of Trick Daddy. **B:** You can hear that he has *heart* and he's *talking* about something. He's not on some dumb lyrics. He's talking about back in the days and how things were when... **A:** I don't understand how that alone validates his music. His flow is disjointed. It's very start-and-stop—you can't follow it. His lyrics aren't clever and the beat is *repetitive*. **B:** C'mon! The beat is real cinematic. **A:** No, it's... **B:** It's definitely on that tip, but I've heard better production. I'd rather listen to Juvenile's "Ha." **A:** It sounds like a demo, *amateurish*. **B:** That's the beauty of it. That it's so *rough*, know what I'm sayin'? It's *basement* style. **A:** So you think that's what he was going for? **B:** Hell yeah. I think he was going for some nigger gutter shit. **A:** [sarcastically] Okay.

"Shirty (Got Her Eyes on Me)," DONELL JONES *Where I Wanna Be (LaFace)*

B: Nice acoustic guitars. Song sounds kinda trivial. **A:** Oh, man... **B:** But I like what he's trying to do. **A:** All of these singers fit into the same mold. **B:** They don't try to elevate the game like D'Angelo, huh? **A:** Not at all. You know this sounds really R. Kelly-ish to me. **B:** It does. He's talented, but I think he's gonna be lumped into that whole little category with Jesse Powell and the rest of 'em. They're *almost* like Baskin-Robbins ice cream. There's lots of different flavors, but it's all really the same thing.



B.G. 'CHOPPER CITY IN THE GHETTO'

CASH MONEY/UNIVERSAL



If hip hop were to give out an award for child prodigies, B.G. would undoubtedly be a shoo-in. At just 18 years old he's already on his fifth solo album (although it's his first major release), *Chopper City in the Ghetto*, a clever collection of painfully vivid urban narratives.

With his nasal monotone and satiny flow, Baby Gangsta (also a member of Cash Money's Hot Boys) forces listeners to *feel* every word he's saying. He runs down his street credentials for potential foes on "Made Man," a laid-back track with a killer bass line and tight syncopated snares.

On "Real Niggaz," a moody mid-tempo tune laced with a jazz-guitar riff and horn

arrangement that could've easily been lifted from an old Albert King record, B.G. reflects on the bleak conditions of his New Orleans neighborhood. And when it comes to bragging about his newfound material wealth, B.G. can hang with the best of them—check the bouncy, dancehall-inspired "Bling Bling" and the R&B-peppered "Cash Money Roll" for proof. *Chopper City in the Ghetto* is a strong effort from one of Cash Money's hella hottest boys.

Charlie R. Braxton

TODD TERRY 'RESOLUTIONS' ASTRALwerks

In the insular realm of house music, loyalty and consistency are essential. Deviation is not merely frowned upon, it's forbidden—particularly if you're among the few to rise above the claustrophobic clutter of sample-happy dubs and disco rip-offs. To that end, famed producer/DJ Todd Terry is asking for a heap of trouble. Deservedly revered for transforming such initially forgettable ditties as Everything but the Girl's 1995 "Missing" into pop hits, he's bravely broadened his groove palette to include electronica on the startling, often brilliant *Resolutions*—and there's a nary a house beat to be found.

It's a ballsy, ultimately savvy move that more dance artists should make. Prior to this disc, Terry was floundering in a wave of tedium that was perilously close to rendering him permanently irrelevant. By at least temporarily moving away from familiar territory, he's rattled his own cage, thus upping his own creative ante, and he's raised the bar for others to meet. Largely instrumental, save for the occasional chant or rant, the set brings a white-knuckled grit and soul to electronica that it's been sorely lacking from its media-induced explosion several years ago. Terry may piss off some of his house-headed disciples, but the smart and adventurous ones will eventually find valor in his desire to break new ground.

Larry Flick



Photo: J. Williams

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CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

BY CHAIRMAN MAO

Who gives a fuck about a goddamn Juno, you ask? Toronto's Choclair for one. In 1997, the 24-year-old MC won the Canadian equivalent of a Grammy for Best Rap Recording for his EP, *What It Takes*. Last year, the grand imperial DJ Premier acknowledged Choclair by slicing a line from his "Just a Second (Remix)" into the chorus of Gang Starr's "You Know My Steez." Unfortunately, being one of the most accomplished hip hop artists way up north can still mean being generally ignored down here in the States. If the thumping sound of his latest indie banger, "Flagrant" (Knee Deep, 718-694-9335), is any indication though, Choclair's not havin' it no more. Over a scratch-heavy, Saukrates-produced track, all snakes and shit-talkers get a serious tongue-lashing: "You apologize, want me on your side / Nah, fuck it, take it back / You got wack shit!" Forget Oreos, eat Choclair cookies.

Granted, Long Branch, New Jersey's Perverted Dialect have saddled themselves with a prototypically poor Backpackers of the Underground-style name. That shouldn't stop cynics from checking out P.D.'s surprisingly dexterous three-song maxi-single. The menacing "Slang Murder" and the likeably smoothed-out "These Words" deliver the expected: true-to-the-rap-game sentiments amid heartfelt promises of verbal homicide. But the series of amusingly freaky phone-sex teases and between-the-sheets boastings found on "1-900-DIALECT" (New World Order, 732-544-8092) actually make good use of the troupe's awkward moniker.

"Now pull your phone close so you can hear clearly / An orgy in Eden is my Big Bang Theory," yields guaranteed satisfaction.

Some of you may be surprised to hear that Brick City kid El Da Sensei has resurfaced without longtime Artifacts cohort Tame One. However, El's latest single, "Frontline"—also available on the multi-flavored German underground compilation *Supernappin'* (Groove Attack, 49-221-9529190)/Ubiquity, 415-864-8448)—features an impressive all-star lineup of Organized Konfusion, Mike Zoot, and F.T. of Street Smartz. Lines like F.T.'s "I'm not some rap nigga that you're dyin' to meet / Just another brother who's hungry and tryin' to eat" and producer Shawn J. Period's harp-n-horns-laced magic-carpet ride conjure visions of a hip hop utopia where dope MCs can rhyme without stress. On the just-as-worthy B side, "All Rise," El shines solo over chiming electric vibes with lyrics like, "For facts of the matter, my chatter's amplified / Supplied by the vibe abstract / Self-written like Ben Affleck." Author, author!



Canada fly: Choclair

HEAVY ROTATION:

- Bucks N' Necks EP
(Large Entertainment, 718-321-7305)
- "On Deadly Ground"
(Blackberry, 818-891-3415)
- "The Final Friction"
(Raw Shack, 718-230-1233)
- "My Word"
(Pentagon, 212-619-5044)
- Rhyme Related EP
(Wreck/Nervous, 212-273-1135)

JIM CROW 'CROW'S NEST' NOONTIME/EPIC

If you heard their name and are expecting Atlanta-based trio Jim Crow to talk about the oppression of black folks or to drop spiritually uplifting jams like OutKast or to kick deep sociopolitical commentary like Goodie M.O.B., *don't*. On their exceptional debut, *Crow's Nest*, Cartel, Motown, and Polow are strictly on some everyday-thug-livin' kind of vibe, with just a touch of twisted humor.

Jim Crow come off lovely in the lyrics department, rocking rushed conversational flows and tight rhymes that are often filled with satire, especially tracks like "Bandits," "Low, Low," and "Big Dreams." And the beats are nothing short of excellent. A judicious blend of live instrumentation and sparse samples, *Crow's Nest* sizzles with cuts like the lead single, "That Drama," which features a liquid bass line that sounds like Bootsy Collins in his prime. "Short Change" wins with its shimmering acoustic guitar riffs and powerful mid-tempo beat. "One of These Days," an incredible mix of hip hop, funk, and soul, is one of the album's best tracks. *Crow's Nest* is certainly a worthy first showing, and Jim Crow are giving the world yet another reason to turn to Atlanta and give thanks.

Charlie R. Braxton



CHEMICAL BROTHERS 'SURRENDER' ASTRALWERKS

Ever wondered why the outside world suddenly started paying attention to electronic music around the same time the Chemical Brothers released their debut, *Dig Your Own Hole* (Astralwerks, 1997)? It might have had something to do with the London club duo's natural gift for fusing booming hip hop beats, crunchy rock guitars, and all sorts of computer mayhem into one kinetic bundle, making each track sound like the Beastie Boys on a weekend bender.

Two years after their Grammy-winning techno uprising, Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons return with *Surrender*. It would be easy to read the title as a battle cry against the succession of Chemical impostors that rose in their wake, particularly considering the dramatic stylistic shifts that come with it. In a slippery move, the group casts aside its trademark B-boy posturing and lets its softer European roots show. *Surrender* contains only traces of the urban American influences that dominated *Dig Your Own Hole*. Here, the emphasis is on acid-drenched house rhythms and smooth bass breaks, as pasty-faced vocalists like Oasis's Noel Gallagher and Kraftwerk-style robots fill in gaps that were once occupied by Schoolly D samples. The homogenization of sound would be disappointing—if only it weren't so damn infectious.

Aldin Vaziri



Tom Rowlands (front) and Ed Simons

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"D" TRAIN - YOU'RE THE ONE FOR ME! THE WHISKEYS - IT'S A LOVE THING! JOE TEX - I GOTCHA
BARRY WHITE - I'VE GONNA LOVE YOU JUST A LITTLE MORE BABY! BILL WITHERS - USE ME
BOCKY JAMES - GIVE IT TO ME BABY! C&C CARLTON - HERE'S A BAD MAMA MAMA
JUNIOR - MAMA USED TO SAY! CRUSADERS FEAT RANDY CRAWFORD - STREET LIFE
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JT MONEY 'PIMPIN' ON WAX' FREEWORLD/PRIORITY

JT Money is the man responsible for 1995's "Shake What Your Mama Gave Ya." And don't front, you *shook* it. On his first solo set, Money adds nothing new to the pimped-out, playalistic genre he popularized four years ago with the Poison Clan, but the pioneer still knows how to make crowds rush the dance floor.



The disco-dipped beat borrowed from the Sugarhill Gang's 1982 "8th Wonder" sounds brand-new on the catchy, Dallas Austin-produced "Rap Ass Nigga." Austin also provides slick R&B-flavored production on "Somethin' About Pimpin'," featuring Too Short at the top of his lyrical game. And the traditional, upbeat call-and-response chorus on "Playa Shit" ("What this is? / It's some playa-ass shit!") never goes out of style. Smooth, bouncy songs like "Kite to the Boyz" and the fiercely energetic "Whatcha Want" are perfect for flossin' at the club

in your Sunday best or drinking malt liquor on your front stoop wearing tube socks and slippers. If you're not from the dirty South, JT's lyrics are indecipherable at times, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. A lot of bass music is full of derogatory lyrics, and *Pimpin' on Wax* is no different. But the funkified tracks are addictive. So you can either complain or keep on shaking your thang.

Allysa S. King

702 '702' MOTOWN

What a difference two years make. Since being nurtured into prominence by R&B Svengali Michael Bivins, teen act 702 has matured into a clique of assertive young women. A credible soul swagger and ample sensuality have replaced the precocious pop-music references that framed their 1996 hit "Steelo" and 1997's "Get It Together." No, they haven't gone hooch. But they have gathered the experience and confidence needed to divorce themselves from the pack of factory-stamped one-album wonders.

This fine, self-titled project wisely reconnects Kameelah Williams, 21, and sisters Irish and Lemisha Grinstead, 19 and 21, with red-hot Missy Elliott (who produced and appears on "Steelo") on "Where My Girls At," a face-crackin' anthem just waiting to happen, and the languid, warmly introspective "You Just Never Know." Although they hold their own with other high-profile producers (including Rick "Dutch" Cousin and Waryn "Smiley" Campbell of Dru Hill fame), it's with La Elliott that their growth is most evident and their chemistry most potent. Lotsa girl groups out there are racing to be a new-generation En Vogue, and 702 could be the first to cross the finish line. *Larry Flick*

REVOLUTIONS
SEARCHLIGHTS



CHANTAY SAVAGE 'THIS TIME' RCA

Chantay Savage is best known for her 1996 remake of Gloria Gaynor's 1975 disco anthem "I Will Survive." Her satisfying third album, *This Time*, is an attempt to quiet those pesky one-hit-wonder whispers once and for all.

Savage is a very talented songwriter—all but two of the tracks, including Keith Sweat's forgettable "Come Around," were self-penned—and her voice is strong. With funky piano solos and



haughty chuckles, she pays adequate homage to Anita Baker's jazzy alto on the sassy "Funny Ways." But on the overwrought come-back-to-me ballad "Just Can't Take This," Savage loses control of her powerful pipes and produces guttural screams akin to a root-canal patient without the anesthesia. When she manages to rein in her voice on "My Oh My," a hip-swaying, finger-snapping ode to new love, the result is a sweet soundtrack for first-date candlelight dinners. She turns in another exquisite performance on the title track, with notable

assistance from lush, choir-like background vocals.

Savage's talent is raw, much like Mariah Carey's was on her too-many-high-notes self-titled debut. Carey succeeded in toning down her histrionics, and if Savage wants to stop hearing those whispers for good, she should do the same.

Allysa S. King

BEFORE DARK 'DAYDREAMIN'' RCA

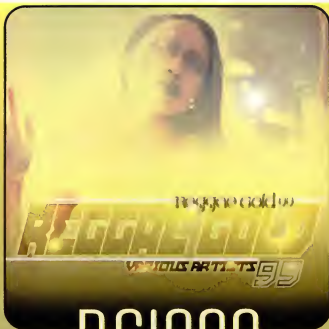
Every year, young black women band together in R&B groups to battle each other for harmonic supremacy. No doubt you remember the Jade, Brownstone, SWV, and En Vogue battles of the early '90s. Well, this year gear up for the pre-bouts among Blaque, Willie Max, and Before Dark. If you don't yet know, Blaque have a futuristic vibe goin'. Willie Max are on the old-school funky side. And Before Dark are like the girls next door—if every girl on your block sounded like Brandy.

Before Dark's debut, *Daydreamin'*, is jammed like a hall locker with boy-crazy songs, ranging from the obsessive ("Always on My Mind") to the provocative ("Push-N-Shove"). On "Come Correct," they tell some boy "we could get it on tonight"—something not even grown-ass Monica is doing anymore. And on another track, they tell some ill' knucklehead "It's All About You." At least Mya had the womanist sense to sing "It's All About Me." The album's overly abundant mid-tempo grooves are so derivative that they may have R. Kelly, Timbaland, and Rodney Jerkins fixin' to sue. Nevertheless, because of the group's quite promising vocals, Before Dark are just some new beats and a few Iyanla Vanzant self-help books away from being strong contenders in the girl-group games.

Craig Seymour



(Clockwise from left) Arke, Max, Jani K.



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1. Why are we living for Mary J. Blige's funky new Cher-inspired look?

Mary



2. Why was Jennifer Lopez the only celebrity who looked like Hollywood royalty at the Oscars, with her hair in a bun, dipped in diamonds, and wearing that gorgeous Badgley Mischka ball gown? 3. And why at the Oscars could Ms. Whitney Houston be

20 QUESTIONS

Da Brat



STEVEN WILLIAMS

heard shouting "Amen!" and "Uh huh!" while Whoopi Goldberg spoke? 4. When Lauryn Hill sang the words "Don't be a hard-rock when you really are a gem," ya think Da Brat, who debuted her gorgeous new look at this year's *Soul Train* Awards in Los Angeles, took them to heart? 5. And speaking of the *Soul Train* Awards, why didn't

anyone tell Busta Rhymes that his fly was wide open during his hyped performance? 6. And not to be mean, but didn't Kelly Price look like a blue M&M while performing at the awards in that too-tight jumpsuit? 7. Isn't NBC's *Will & Grace* one of the funniest shows on TV? 8. If it weren't for the sex appeal of Omar Epps and Claire Danes, would there be any reason to see the abominable film *The Mod Squad*? 9. After seeing that sexy video for Busta's "What's It Gonna Be?!", featuring Janet Jackson, ya think Blackstreet cried because they messed up and turned Ms. Jackson into a mere pinball for their video "Girlfriend/Boyfriend"? 10. Don't the yummy new LifeSavers cream candies taste like little milkshakes? 11. Aren't Harlem World really just another Junior M.A.F.I.A., but without Lil' Kim?

12. Considering the fact that he only has one single, why is rapper Eminem already headlining his own shows? 13. Not that there's anything wrong with Chilean actress Leonor Varela, but don't you think ABC could've at least gotten an Egyptian or dark-skinned actress to play the Queen of the Nile in its upcoming four-hour, \$30 million *Cleopatra* mega-miniseries? 14. So after Robert De Niro's *Analyze This*, how many more Mob-boss movies do you think he has left in him? 15. Why do we keep hearing people say that singer

Tyrese has taken model Tyson Beckford's place, as if two fine, black male hard-bodies couldn't exist at the same time? 16. After seeing Laurence Fishburne kick virtual ass in his new flick, *The Matrix*, we wonder who would win if Fishburne had to fight *Blade*'s Wesley Snipes in the battle of the black martial-arts superstars? 17. If D'Angelo has time to perform with Eric Clapton at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, why hasn't he

found the time to release his long-awaited sophomore album? 18. Since when (and how) did beaded stocking caps become stylish? 19. The new animated series *Futurama* is dope, but

don't you keep wishing Homer or Bart would show up to give the future some sorely needed *Simpsons* flavor? 20. And finally, now that Loud Records president/CEO Steve Rifkind has a multi-million-dollar deal with Miramax to make films, you think we'll soon see the Wu-Tang Clan starring in a remake of 1976's *The Bad News Bears*?



Wesley

Laurence

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THE DETAILS

VIBEFashion: "Wipe Out"

page 148-149: From left: White cotton tank top and blue nylon board shorts, both by NSU (for more information, please call 714-545-8226); sneakers by Vans; backpack by Oakley; surfboard by Pat Rawson; black cotton basic crewneck T-shirt \$13 by Calvin Klein Underwear available at Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Burdines stores nationwide; blue nylon shorts \$45 by Voicem available at Val Surf, L.A., B-Side, N.Y.C., and Used Shelter, Minnesota; boots by Timberland; sunglasses by Jet; backpack by Oreil; board by Xanadu; nylon tank top by Kona Wetsuits Wildcats; navy corduroy cargo shorts \$40 by Hurley available at The Buckle, Salt Lake City, Paragon Sportswear, N.Y.C., and select Bloomingdale's stores nationwide; sneakers by DC; board by John Carpenter; straw hat by Le Hat; backpack by Hurley; white cotton T-shirt \$17, gray and black nylon shorts \$48, white bucket hat, and backpack, all by Ezekiel (for more information, please call 949-955-1106); sneakers by Reef; watch by Swatch; glasses by Smith; board by Cordell.

page 150: Neon green and white nylon floral-print board shorts by NSU (for more information, please call 714-545-8226).

page 151: Blue viscose Jamaica Spirit tropical-print shirt \$58 by GUESS? (for more information, please call 800-39 GUESS?); blue and red board shorts \$49 by Hurley available at Paragon Sportswear, N.Y.C., Huntington Surf Spot, California, and select Bloomingdale's stores nationwide; white bucket hat by GAP; surfboard by John Carpenter.

page 152: Orange nylon board shorts \$48 by Ezekiel (for more information, please call 949-955-1106).

page 153: White cotton tee-kwon do dragon-print shirt \$58 by Tommy Jeans available at major department stores nationwide; red nylon "Elmoro" cargo shorts with white piping \$48 by Mossimo available at Macy's stores nationwide; mesh hat by Hemp.

page 154-155: From left: Burgundy "Hawaii Five-O" woven cotton and rayon three-quarter-sleeve shirt \$38 and hat, both by PNB Nation available at Macy's stores nationwide; navy nylon floral shorts \$48 by Quicksilver available at Quicksilver stores and major department stores nationwide; white cotton tank top \$11 by Fruit of the Loom available at major department stores nationwide; black nylon board shorts \$48 by Ezekiel (for more information, please call 949-955-1106); watch by Swatch; cream, green and blue floral cotton and rayon button-down shirt \$45 by Club (for more information, please call 800-ITS-CLUB); blue corduroy shorts \$40 by Hurley (for more information, please call 949-548-9375); navy nylon board shorts with baby blue and white floral border by NSU (for more information, please call 714-545-8226); blue and yellow towel by Nautica.

VIBESyle: "Criminal-Minded"

page 156-157: From left: Black cotton sleeveless sweatshirt \$49 by GUESS? available at GUESS? stores nationwide; black cotton cargo sweatpants \$70 by Avirex available at The Cockpit, N.Y.C., and Jimmy Jazz, N.Y.C., (for more information, please call 800-2-AVIREX); slides by Fila; socks by Champion; black cotton sleeveless T-shirt \$20 by Everlast (for more information, please go to www.everlastusa.com); black cotton fleece cargo sweatpants \$55 by Pelle Pelle (for more information, please call 888-279-3949); navy cotton rib tank top with gray trim \$18 by Unionbay available at Canal Jeans, N.Y.C., and major department stores nationwide; white mesh tear-away pants \$54 by Tommy Hilffiger Athletics available at select Macy's, Dillard's, and Bloomingdale's stores nationwide; watch by Techno Marine; black cotton T-shirt \$15 by Champion available at Foot Locker stores nationwide; orange nylon cargo pants \$68 by 555 Soul available at Up Against the Wall, Washington, D.C., Indigo Flowers, L.A., and Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C.; boots by Giorgio New York; boots by Timberland; beige linen button-down short-sleeve shirt \$52 and beige linen cargo pants \$68, both by 555 Soul available at Up Against the Wall, Washington, D.C., Indigo Flowers, L.A., and Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C.; boots by Timberland; watch by GUESS?

page 158: Black cotton T-shirt \$15 by Champion available at Foot Locker stores nationwide.

page 159: From left: Burgundy and gray cotton raglan T-shirt \$55 and burgundy cotton sweatpants \$70, both by Phat Farm available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; socks by Tommy Hilffiger; boots by Timberland; watch by Nike; Walkman by Panasonic Shock Wave; light blue denim long-sleeve shirt \$40 by Levi's

(continued on page 106)

HIP-POP-SOUL

As Seen On
Tour With
*NSYNC




"When the three of
them get together,
it's like magic."
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"Sounds like Shamari,
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For more information, write to VIBE/Get It On, 215 Lexington Ave., 6th floor, NY, NY 10016. VIBE will forward your request to each of the designers you name. It is the responsibility of the designers to respond to your requests.

THE DETAILS

(continued from page 184)

available at Levi's stores and major department stores nationwide; navy linen cotton cargo pant \$68 by 555 Soul available at Up Against the Wall, Washington, D.C.; Indigo Flowers, L.A., and Triple 5 Soul, N.Y.C.; orange cotton slyon twill flight suit \$120 by Avirex available at The Cockpit, N.Y.C., and Jimmy Jazz, N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 800-2-AVIREX); boots by Timberland; watch by Techno Marine.

Gear: "Catchin' Rays"

page 160: From top to bottom: 1) 1612/s sunglasses \$180 by Gucci available at Gucci boutiques nationwide; 2) 110/ 1/706 sunglasses \$130 by Emporio Armani available at Emporio Armani boutiques nationwide; 3) Black sunglasses \$65 by Tommy Hilfiger available at Macy's, Dillard's, and Bloomingdale's stores nationwide; 4) RLX Ri sunglasses \$100 by Polo Sport available at Polo Sport stores nationwide; 5) Blue electricity "Gazelle" sunglasses \$130 by Adidas (for more information, please call 800-223-0180 x248); 6) "Mad Wrap" sunglasses \$119 by Revo (for more information, please call 800-472-9226); 7) "Rox" sunglasses \$45 by GUESS Eyewear available at GUESS stores nationwide; 8) Silver N5004F sunglasses \$130 by Nautica available at Sunglass Hut stores nationwide; 9) 474/A sunglasses \$190 by Versace available at Versace boutiques nationwide; 10) "Predator One" \$99 by Ray Ban (for more information, please call 800-4-RAYBAN); 11) Green tinted "Ravine" sunglasses \$75 by Timberland (for more information, please call 800-445-5543); 12) "Coup" sunglasses \$119 by Killer Loop (for more information, please call 800-472-9226); 13) Aqua "Rage" sunglasses \$119 by Wink (for more information, please call 212-760-0262 or 310-372-2595); 14) cK 1012/1/s sunglasses \$125 by cK Eyewear available at Calvin Klein stores nationwide or (for more information, please go to www.marshon.com); 15) FC 199 "Ice" sunglasses \$145 by Fendi available at Fendi stores nationwide or (for more information, please go to www.marshon.com).

Sneak Peek: Air Terro \$65 by Nike (for more information, please call 800-355-NIKE).

VIBEFace: Makin' Moves

page 162: White bikini from trim \$68 by Tommy Hilfiger available at Macy's stores nationwide; violet cashmere hoodie \$135 by P.A.L. by Jeffrey Grubb available at Barney's New York, N.Y.C., Stagnan, Glencoe, Ill., and Sybil, San Francisco; white cotton carpenter jeans \$68 by Tommy Jeans available at major department stores nationwide.

Tech: "Five Alive"

page 173: Birthdate \$19.95, by Fahl (888-888-9231 or www.birthdate.com); JetTalker \$169 by DynaForm (800-467-1459 or www.dynafirm.com); Earthmate \$149 by DeLorme (800-452-5931 or www.delorme.com); Synapse Pager Card by PageMart Wireless, (888-318-2010 or www.pagemart.com); Froggy \$10 by Pilotfan, www.pilotfan.com; Froggy, InfoRover Select \$29.95 by Pendragon (847-816-9660 or www.pendragon-software.com); Small Talk \$79.99 by Concept Kitchen (888-611-PDAS or www.conceptkitchen.com); IntelliGolf \$29.95, \$79.95 with golf cart mount, by Karrier Communications (800-741-9070 or www.intelligolf.com); Feet-It \$49.95 by Orang-Otang (616-446-0705 or www.orang-otang.com); DietLog and ExcerLog \$89 by Sofcare Clinical Informatics (206-780-1729 or www.dietlog.com); Quicken \$39.95 by Landware (800-526-3977 or www.landware.com); ExpensePlus \$69 by Walletware (800-640-2058 or www.walletware.com); Duo \$15 by Cross (800-510-9660 or www.cross-pcg.com); Titanium Hardcase \$99.95 by RhinoSkin (307-734-8833 or www.rhinoskin.com); Pilotgear H.Q. Stylus \$14.95 (www.pilotgear.com); for Palm V and accessories call 800-881-7256 or go to palmorder.modusmedia.com).

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V PROPS

The Jets

Finish this lyric: "How did you know / 'Cause I never told / You found out..."

If you said "I've got a crush on you," you not only remember the Jets—the eight-member Tongan-American sibling crew of late-'80s fame—you can probably bust the side-stepping moves Leroy, Eddie, Eugene, Haini, Rudy, Kathi, Elizabeth, and Moana Wolgramm did in the video for their 1986 hit.

Beginning as a hula-dancing, fire-eating Polynesian troupe that toured hotels, the Jets—named after the fairly tough gang from *West Side Story*—dropped five Top 10 hits between 1985 and 1989. Can't you hear 'em now? "Crush on You," "Rocket 2 U," "You Got It All." Catchy, simple, and full of home-room angst, the Jets' infectious beats and synthesized horn arrangements captured the hormone-laden pain of unrequited high school love.

In those days, sweet dreams were made of these devout Mormons with the work ethic of the Jackson 5 and the sugary-sweet sound of DeBarge. Their squeaky-clean image and Osmond-y optimism made us believe that if we took a few voice lessons, practiced hard enough, and rocked those bright colors and crisp collars, we too could land a multimillion-dollar, seven-album deal with MCA, pick up an American Music Award for Best New Artist (1986), and play for the President of the United States and the king of Tonga.

Six years later, though, the band filed for bankruptcy. The fickle teen market had turned on them, the New Kids on the Block were the flavor of the week, and the \$12 million the Jets had earned from tours had dwindled to less than \$1 million. Since MCA dropped them in 1992, the group has released two albums—1995's fluffy-bear *Love People* (Liberty Park) and last year's gospel-tinged *Love Will Lead the Way* (Shadow Mountain)—but neither sold more than 8,000 copies.

Still, the Wolgramm brood is not down for the count. Today, Eddie manages a Hollywood Video store and Kathi's a customer-service agent for United Airlines in San Francisco. Elizabeth's married and living in Provo, Utah; Moana sings local Utah commercial jingles; and Eugene's a basketball coach at Salt Lake City's West High School. Original members Haini, Leroy, and Rudy have rounded up their seven younger siblings and moved to the Los Angeles area, where a Y2K version of the group currently works the casino-lounge circuit.

As long as puppy-love fantasies fill tender teen dreams, the Wolgramm fam's bubble-gum tunes, whether by new Jets or old, will surely continue to pop.

Rochell Thomas



The Jets, 1986.
Top row, left to
right: Eugene,
Kathi, Eddie, Haini;
middle row: Leroy,
Elizabeth, Rudy;
bottom: Moana

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